

SUMMER RECIPE SPECIAL

Nigel Slater's seasonal classics

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20 great wines for under £10



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Nigel Slater



Juice, that glorious nectar from ripe fruit and vegetables, has been somewhat hijacked by the healthy-eating brigade. Whether it's spinach and orange or cucumber and tomato, the liquid fruit and vegetable salad is claimed to cure anything from lack of libido to tennis elbow. What is so irritating about the modern notion of juice as cure-all is that it has been pretty much overlooked for its qualities as a drink. In my book, juice is the essence of the fruit, its heart and soul. And while I wouldn't ever want my consumption of peaches or tomatoes to be confined to a glass, on a baking summer's day, a long, slim glass of juice is more than just a drink. It's a celebration of the joy that lies hidden in our vegetables and fruit.

Of course, a diet principally made up of juice can never be a good thing. That rush of energy you feel after a glass of carrot and beetroot is nothing more than the sugar, easily assimilated in liquid form, hitting your blood

stream. The side effects of a liquid diet can also wreak havoc on your digestive system, as anyone who has had slightly too much beetroot juice will know.

Ariel Leve has been testing out the claims for a diet made up of brightly coloured healthy liquids. It was not an easy ride, as you'll discover in her column in this issue.

We also have a recipe special for you this month. Recipes from Spain and the eastern Mediterranean, recipes for eating in the garden and for cooking out of doors. These are ideas with which to toast British summertime.

This month we also say hello to our new wine writer. David Williams has been testing summer wines for under a tenner and has come up with 20 great value bottles that would be just the thing for sipping under a shady, blossom-laden bower. At least that's if he can drag you away from your glass of iced spinach and cauliflower.



Nigel Slater's baked peaches with maple syrup and vanilla, see page 24.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN LOVEKIN FOR THE OBSERVER

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The cover

PHOTOGRAPH BY
Romas Foord

It's the little things that make a cake great.



We've been a family baking business now for over a century, so we understand it's the smallest details that make the perfect cake. That's why we have always put our heart and soul into creating and perfecting our range of finishing touches, from traditional Hundreds & Thousands and Silver Balls to our new, pretty Wafer Daisies that can transform the simplest of cakes. It's our passion for getting the little things right that means if it's got the Dr. Oetker name on it, you can be sure of great results every time.



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Quality is the best recipe



The happy eater

Jay Rayner

I like a hands-on approach to dinner – but that does make it tricky when I tell the children to use cutlery

I am yet to meet a meal that absolutely demanded a trip to the cutlery drawer. It's amazing what you can do to a risotto by scooping with the middle and index finger, and the only thing that stops me lifting up a bowl of soup to my lips is the appalled stares of others. When I'm alone, the spoon can go hang. That's the reality. I suspect I am meant to confess to my hands-on relationship with my dinner; instead I want to boast about it.

I accept that, in this, I am a terrible father. I spend enormous amounts of credit from the parental authority bank, lecturing my boys on the uses of cutlery while, at the same time, watching my own hands slip unbidden across the table towards the remains of the roast chicken, determined to rip off the parson's nose. If I was a fraud I might tell you that my suspicion of cutlery is born of an acute palate and a disdain for the way the metallic taste interferes with the flavour of what I'm eating. Even I accept this is bollocks. Try licking a clean knife from the cutlery drawer. What does it taste of? It tastes of cold.

In truth I suspect it's all down to



a killer combination of greed and self-obsession. When I eat with my hands I am closer to my food. I am inside my dinner. I am playing out some ancient need to hunt and gather, albeit on a very small scale – roughly 12 inches across. See that man in the picture at the top of this column? If the words “missing link” and “Cro-Magnon” have ever skittered across your mind, it will all begin to make a fetid kind of sense.

Spare ribs, with which I have had a long and intense relationship, are a no-brainer where hands are concerned; if ever I see someone using a knife and fork on a spare rib I instinctively know that, were we ever to talk – about anything at all – it would end with me

In Tokyo I found that sushi was meant to be eaten with fingers. Suddenly it made sense

wanting to punch them. Our whole approach to the world, to life, to the really important things like lunch, will be so completely different that it couldn't be otherwise. Obviously it's the same with chicken. And lamb chops. And sausages. And asparagus. And crab, and wild mushrooms sautéed in butter to a bronzed crispness, and the best kinds of salad, and mussels and clams and paella. Ooh! The crispy bits at the bottom.

One of the most delightful discoveries, on a trip to Tokyo, was that sushi was actually meant to be eaten with the hands rather than chopsticks, a complex manoeuvre involving rolling it on to its back with the index finger then placing it, fish-side down on the tongue, with middle finger and thumb. Sushi suddenly made sense. Hell, it looks like finger food. And if it looks like finger food...

Do I think eating with one's hands is sexy? Nah. That's a fallback for lousy novelists, who have, driven by imagination deficit, mistaken food as a metaphor for sensuality when really it's just dinner. I can't imagine anyone finding thumbs that smell of gravy a turn-on (though if you do, you know where to find me). That said, I have always thought the sexiest thing in the world is unbridled enthusiasm, and the hands-on approach bawls that noisily. This, at least, is what I tell myself as I brush the eating irons to one side and prepare to get up to my armpits in what I'm eating.

Now then, where's that tub of ice-cream? **OFM**

FOOD TALES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

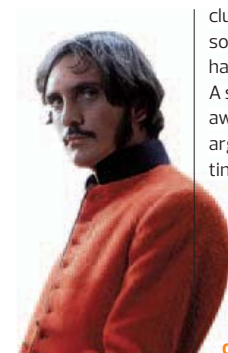
Lunch with Terence Stamp

Lunch in 2002 with Terence Stamp, my idol, broke my heart. We arranged to meet at London's Savoy Hotel where he was living at the time. He was to be photographed first and then I'd arrive for lunch at 1pm which I duly did, announcing myself to the reception desk. I waited in the lobby. Front desk failed to locate him waiting in the dining room. Fuming.

When some quaking minion finally showed me to his table his first words were: "Well, that's 20 minutes less interview time for you." Oh, the misery of it. Stamp has severe

food allergies that took him a long time to identify – back in the days when such things were generally called “making a fuss”. He can't tolerate dairy products, wheat and wine and all the while we fans were fainting at him as Sgt Troy, pictured, in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, or in *Billy Budd* or *Poor Cow*, he was crippled with gut ache and developing a duodenal ulcer. Baking a palatable wheat-free loaf took him 15 years, and after meeting Elizabeth Buxton, who was on the same dietary mission for her daughter, they developed the excellent Stamp Collection.

So you'd have thought he'd be pretty



clued up about what to eat. But lo! His Dover sole arrived and it transpired the vegetables had been cooked in butter. Back they went. A sauce crisis followed. The tartare was sent away and replaced with horseradish (cream, argh!) which then had to be scraped – every tiny morsel – off his plate.

By coffee I had developed the crippling gut ache from sheer terror. As we left the Savoy he was scanning the upcoming Valentine Day's menu. “There's nothing much on here I can eat,” he said gloomily. I climbed on to a bus with a heavy heart.

Caroline Boucher



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The fussy eater

Ariel Leve

I'm doing three days with no food, just strange, coloured vegetable juices. Will I feel better for it?

Recently I decided to spend three days drinking juice. Three days where I have no food and cut out caffeine entirely. I'm not sure what prompted this decision. Maybe it was temporary insanity. Maybe because everyone was spring cleaning; I couldn't deal with my closets so I figured I'd clean my colon. Consider this: I have not gone a day without coffee since I was 13.

I rarely deprive myself and never diet. My idea of depriving myself is not eating the entire bar of dark chocolate. When I gain weight, I'll eat less for a few days and exercise. Or I'll sleep more.

The cleanse would require stamina. Discipline. People say it's good to push your limits. According to the testimonials on the website for the cleanse, I would lose weight and my skin would glow. How hard could it be?

I should have known to be sceptical of the testimonials. They were all positive. Everything was amazing. The cleanse was amazing. Concentration levels were amazing. The parsley protected the liver and spleen. Amazing! It was amazing that no one mentioned being hungry.



The plan was that every day I would consume six 16oz bottles of raw vegetable and fruit juice. These juices had the consistency of water. Expensive flavoured water.

What I did find appealing, almost mesmerising, was the aesthetic. It's a very luxurious way to drink juice. The bottles are pristine and almost medicinal looking. The obsessive compulsive in me appreciated that they lined up nicely in the fridge. Plus, they were delivered to my door. All of them labelled with a number so that you knew when to drink which juice. Juice number one was green – kale, parsley, cucumber, romaine, celery – all vegetables which I enjoy chewing.

If George Clooney was pouring this for me, I could not have looked forward to it more

Drinking them was another matter. It was like sipping a lawn.

Juice number two was tastier. Apple, pineapple and mint. Number three was another green one, and four – a spicy lemonade – was really uneventful. Five was slightly more exciting. Carrot, apple, beetroot, ginger. The main event was number six. Cashew nut milk with vanilla bean, agave nectar and cinnamon. If George Clooney was pouring this for me personally I could not have looked forward to it more.

The first day of the cleanse I realised that without coffee, I have no incentive to get out of bed. And that night, I made the mistake of going out for dessert at my friend Liza's birthday. At the table, it was announced there would be "one of everything" and the desserts were passed callously under my nose. I didn't have a bite. Not a sugar-coated berry. I had the discipline of an Olympic athlete. Who knew?

Day two, caffeine withdrawal. I woke up with a crippling headache and my energy level was nonexistent. I missed chewing. I was cranky and wanted something to eat. I needed something to live for. Oh wait, I had a green bottle of liquid kale in the fridge. Never mind.

Day three made day two seem like a holiday. All I could do was sit and pray that my headache wasn't a brain haemorrhage. Even my teeth ached.

Overall, I can't say I'm happy I did it. I learned how much peppermint tea I could drink. I stuck to it, which I'm proud of, but the reward was minimal. The most positive thing? Not having to wash any dishes for three days. **OFM**

KITCHEN APPS

OFM tests foodie-friendly iPhone apps. Eat, drink, download...

Sushipedia



What is it?

Free on iTunes, it describes itself as "a world of delicacies at your fingertips" which in a sense is true, although there's

nothing you can actually eat. That app is a few years off.

Will it increase your enjoyment of sushi?

Although it sometimes reads as if it has been translated from the Japanese by a student, this is part of the charm. The "detailed tasting

notes" on more than 200 types of sushi morsel are pretty comprehensive – even including an entry for "surimi" – otherwise known as crabsticks – so even One Stop does sushi now.

Impress your fellow diners with facts like this one...

The chef will often perform a ritual massage on a live octopus prior to boiling.

What if you feel guilty about depleting the oceans?

Try the "what's in season now?" feature, one for sustainable types.

THE PIE CHART

Food news in numerical form

This month: the Guantanamo Bay diet

Official US guideline for weight maintenance (calories per day)

2,500

4,200

Daily caloric content of Guantanamo Bay detainees' diet

Average weight gain of prisoners during their time at Guantanamo Bay

9kg

Hours of exercise given to detainees weekly

Compliant prisoners 12

Max. security prisoners

2

SOURCES ABC, FOX

My life on a plate

Dervla Kirwan

Actor, 38, Hampshire

INTERVIEW John Hind

PHOTOGRAPH Suki Dhanda

When I went along to audition for the job of the voice on M&S's "...Not Just Food" ads, I had terrible flu and depression, was feeling crap about everything, but when I read "tossed lovingly" and saw chocolate flow erotically over sponge, I burst out laughing. For the take which made them choose me, I had my eyes closed and was being very filthy. I wish I had all the recordings. I remember one in which I went off into a rant, asking: "Oh come on, who enjoys wine responsibly?"

When I was six we visited aunts on a farm in the [Irish] countryside. And in the middle of the dinner table was a huge cow's tongue. The sheer length! It was repulsive. I thought: "Sweet Jesus, must we eat this?" It brutalised me.

When I first dated my husband [actor Rupert Penry-Jones] he cooked a Valentine's meal at his apartment – with homemade blinis, caviar, salmon, champagne. Any old sod can buy chocs and flowers. But this was incredibly sweet, personal, private – and a week early. I thought: "That's it, I'll have a piece of him."

I'd never scan the starters and main courses on a menu in a restaurant as a child. I'd want a dessert for starter, for main course and for dessert. I've still got a fetish about them because they're so immediately comforting, yet forbidden, in this business where appearance is so important. Really I should be about 17 stone.

I love my juicer. I bring it on to film sets with a bag of fresh fruit and away I go. I mix in an avocado too, which sounds disgusting but isn't. Five hours' energy it gives me. My juicer goes everywhere. It's flown all over the world.

I was a waitress at a really rundown Italian restaurant in Dublin, for about a week, at 16. I thought it was going to be romantic – overhearing affairs and watching first-time couples all loved up. But instead I was just running about constantly.

I cocked up a beautiful lasagne for a dinner party while I was heavily pregnant. It looked perfect as I served it, with a lovely golden crispy top. But it was ice-cold inside. I'd switched the grill on instead of the oven. And I wept. I wept terribly. But I enjoyed pregnancy – it gave me the chance to eat whatever I wanted.

My mother was a woman of the 50s who had a family in the 70s while finding her political and feminist voice. She could make marvellous three-course meals after teaching all day but hated it. Because of that legacy, it took me a long time to realise the delights of the family table. My mother-in-law, who's an actress, showed me how crucial Sunday's meal is.

I ate ostrich. I'm not very proud of it. I was going through a very experimental period and probably during foot and mouth. It was exquisite, but I felt very guilty. I've never stolen food though. Well, not outside the home. But I've nicked my kids' Easter eggs from the larder. All four of them. **OFM**

*Dervla Kirwan stars in **The Silence**, to be broadcast on BBC1 later this year*

Styling by Helen Seamons; hair and make up Dina at Era; dress JohnLewis.com; shoes Christian Dior, Diorcouture.com; teapot cake, butterfly cake, choccywoccydoodah.com; giant cup cakes, Sweet Things, www.sweetthings.biz; lollipops, Harrods.com; cake stands, anthropologie.eu; vintage china, mrsstokes.com; lace tablecloth, candlesticks and candles, JohnLewis.com; heron, bird-stop.co.uk

Dervla Kirwan photographed for Observer Food Monthly at Mudchute farm, London, 28 April 2010.

**'On the dinner table
was a huge cow's tongue.
The sheer length! It
brutalised me'**



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Lunch with Mariella

This month Jeffrey Archer

The millionaire author, confidant of Margaret Thatcher and former guest of Her Majesty doesn't suffer interviewers gladly. Especially when he has to eat with them...

It was all going so well. I had arrived at Lord Archer's chosen eatery with 10 minutes to spare and checked out the airy beige room, with its elegantly white-dressed tables and linen upholstered chairs in apricot and ochre. The owner Lucio, a mini-Italian replica of Billy Connolly, had greeted me effusively and we had reminisced briefly about my brief Euro trash immersion during the 80s when he was headwaiter at San Lorenzo. My gaze hovered in awe at the cosmetic creation that was Joan Collins's face in the large Terry O'Neill portrait staring down at me from the wall, Isabella Rossellini's barefaced beauty in contrast next to it.

Then Archer arrived amid a flurry of waiters and reprimanded me for my promptness. "I'm the one who's on time," he scolded as he slipped into his seat and focused on the list of suggestions Lucio himself was raining down on us, "I know you like soups Jeffrey, I can do for you a passata of cauliflower and leeks? And how about a little pasta to follow, perhaps a veal ragout?" You had to hand it to him, he knew his client (and investor) though having catered to him for more than 30 years that isn't too surprising. The attention wasn't focused solely on his lordship though: "For you perhaps a beetroot salad with spelt, walnuts, olive oil and lemon? We have some clams and spaghetti if you feel like pasta?" We were putty in Lucio's capable culinary hands.

Ordering over, it was time to chat but where to start with a man like Archer? Deputy chairman of the Conservative party during Thatcher's reign and later candidate for London mayor, forced to stand down and later imprisoned for perjury in a libel case where he used a false alibi to deny a liaison with a prostitute, bestselling author of more than 400 million books worldwide, few teenagers reach 20 without devouring his tale of warring siblings, *Kane and*



Abel. Then there are his investments in theatre. "I average a 50% return," he tells me with glee. *Enron*, *Jerusalem*, the touring *Sound of Music*, are, he says just some of the productions he has invested in. He estimates his art collection to be worth a billion pounds and his canny buys include Picassos and some of the best sculptors of the 20th century including Eric Gill.

We kick off with a catch-up. He has just flown overnight from Mumbai where he was engaged to open a large new bookshop. "I got on a plane at midnight, the man who was taking care of me said, 'I've never seen anything like it. The plane took off, he slept. Then they said ladies and gentlemen we're landing and he woke up.' So I don't even know I've been on a plane."

It's at moments like this that you

'Just because you are a drunk and a layabout, don't expect everyone to be,' he says

ILLUSTRATION
Patrick Morgan

need to pull out the plonk, but Archer is virtually teetotal. He has "a glass of red wine at night with dinner but I've never been drunk in my life". Surely as a teenager, renting out deckchairs in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset he must have gorged on scrumpy or cheap spirits? "Never been drunk in my life," he repeats, following up with a surprise attack on my friendly pro-grape banter. "Stop putting what you think you ought to do for yourself on me," he says. "Just because you're a drunk and a layabout and a lush don't expect everybody else to be." I check over my shoulder in case his comments are directed at someone beyond my eyeline but no; it's water-sipping moi he has just lobbed that broadside at. He makes you feel like an extra in a play where deviating from his script will not be tolerated. >>

He brings up Gordon Brown's encounter with Mrs Duffy, so I ask if Archer feels empathy with him, having been judged harshly by the public during his perjury case and receiving an arguably extreme sentence? Are we too quick to denounce others for human failings? An arctic front descends. "All I know is that 95% of my friends remained loyal and the next four books went to number one."

I wasn't going to pursue the topic but his response is so out of proportion to the question that I'm compelled to continue. I tell him that for a lot of people the fact that he emerged unscathed and apparently unchastened from two years in jail is not to be celebrated. His cheeky-chappy grin has entirely disappeared and his bottom lip appears to be trembling. He reminds me of Mr Toad when Mole and Badger take his car keys away. After moments of silence and a further prodding from me, on why he can't express remorse, he squeezes through tight lips: "I'm not going to answer, you're wasting your time".

For some painful minutes we're stuck in a rut, him repeating the latter, me querying his unprecedented fury until a glamorous elderly lady greets him and thereby releases the tension. "I was told we were discussing food. If I'd known this was coming up I wouldn't have done it," he says icily, once she is dispensed with.

He slowly thaws as my questions return to uncontroversial territory. He boasts that he has raised huge amounts in recent years as a charity auctioneer, a staggering £2.4m in the past year alone. Clearly he enjoys the showmanship but what causes does he support, or does he have a sort of scattergun approach? "Scattergun, to use your phrase. I'm seeing a lady this afternoon whose charity is to make sure that children wear helmets on their bicycles."

It's hard for me to get too animated about these crazy irresponsible youngsters so I ask about Mary, his academic wife, now running a Cambridgeshire hospital – "the best in Britain," he proudly declares – who has stood by him through thick and thin. Did he ever worry that she might leave him? "Not Mary's style, it never crossed my mind." So what is the secret to the longevity of their marriage? "The simplest of clichés, as long as you're still both interesting to each other. I think if you stop admiring the person you live with that's a problem

Mariella ate
Beetroot salad
with spelt; linguine
with clams.

Jeffrey ate
Vegetable passata;
tagliatelle with
veal ragout.

They drank
Blood orange juice
and sugar (Jeffrey),
still water and
espresso (Mariella).

The Table
Lucio, 257-259
Fulham Road,
London, SW3 6HY;
020 7823 3007.
Set lunch, £16.50.

'Margaret said: Jeffrey, what's the difference between being a great leader and being bossy?'

and I admire her tremendously." One of Archer's redeeming features is his penchant for feisty women. His mother was by all accounts formidable, his wife has proved her strength in the face of great adversity and then there are all his years as Thatcher's confidant. "My mother was strong, my wife is strong, Margaret I adored. Yeah, I admire strong women." I muse aloud on whether it allows him to play his favourite role of mischievous scamp and for once he suffers my theory. "Maybe I take advantage of it, but so do they. Margaret always became a lady when she needed to be one." He clearly has great fondness for the Iron Lady and claims to see her monthly still. "She used to say, 'Try to explain to me Jeffrey, the difference between being a great leader and being bossy? It seems men are great leaders, women are bossy.'"

Politicians and politics are high on the menu and not just because we meet on the eve of the election. He

says Nick Clegg has inspired him to consider scrapping Trident and that proportional representation is clearly the future, yet describes himself as a life Tory because he believes in free enterprise. No wonder; it's a system that has seen this middle-class boy from a down-at-heel seaside town become a member of the House of Lords, a bestselling author, a multi-millionaire, an art collector of some note and a theatrical impresario in his spare time. He puts his achievements down to hard grind and a rigorous schedule, so focused that the 12 seconds it takes to descend the lift in his Thameside apartment is utilised for "exercises". "Are you serious?" I ask incredulously, "Oh yes, absolutely. Would you like to see them?" Sadly for my fellow diners I decline: there is such a thing as too much fun – but I admit I'm still a little curious. **OFM**

Jeffrey Archer's And Thereby Hangs a Tale (Macmillan) is out on 21 May

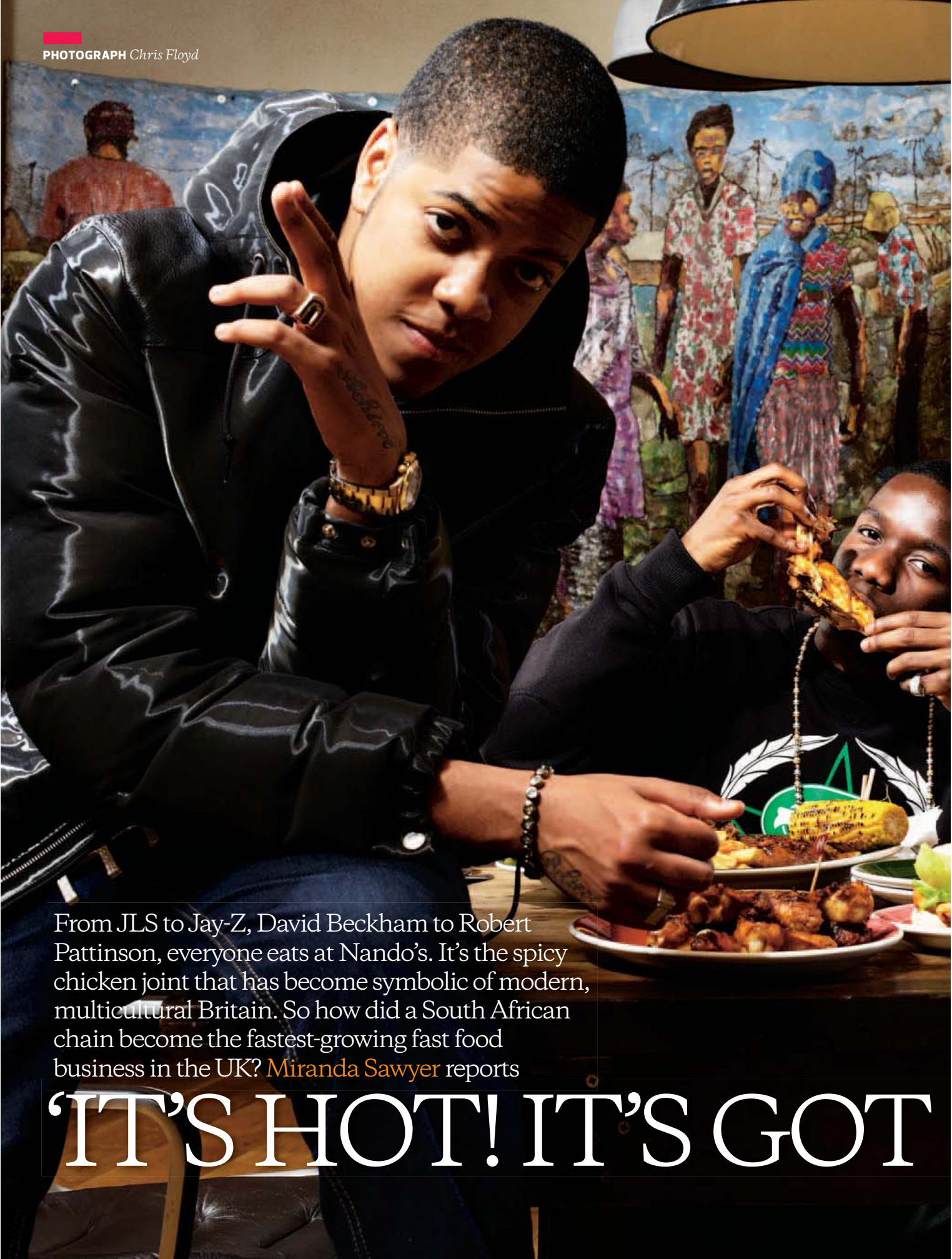


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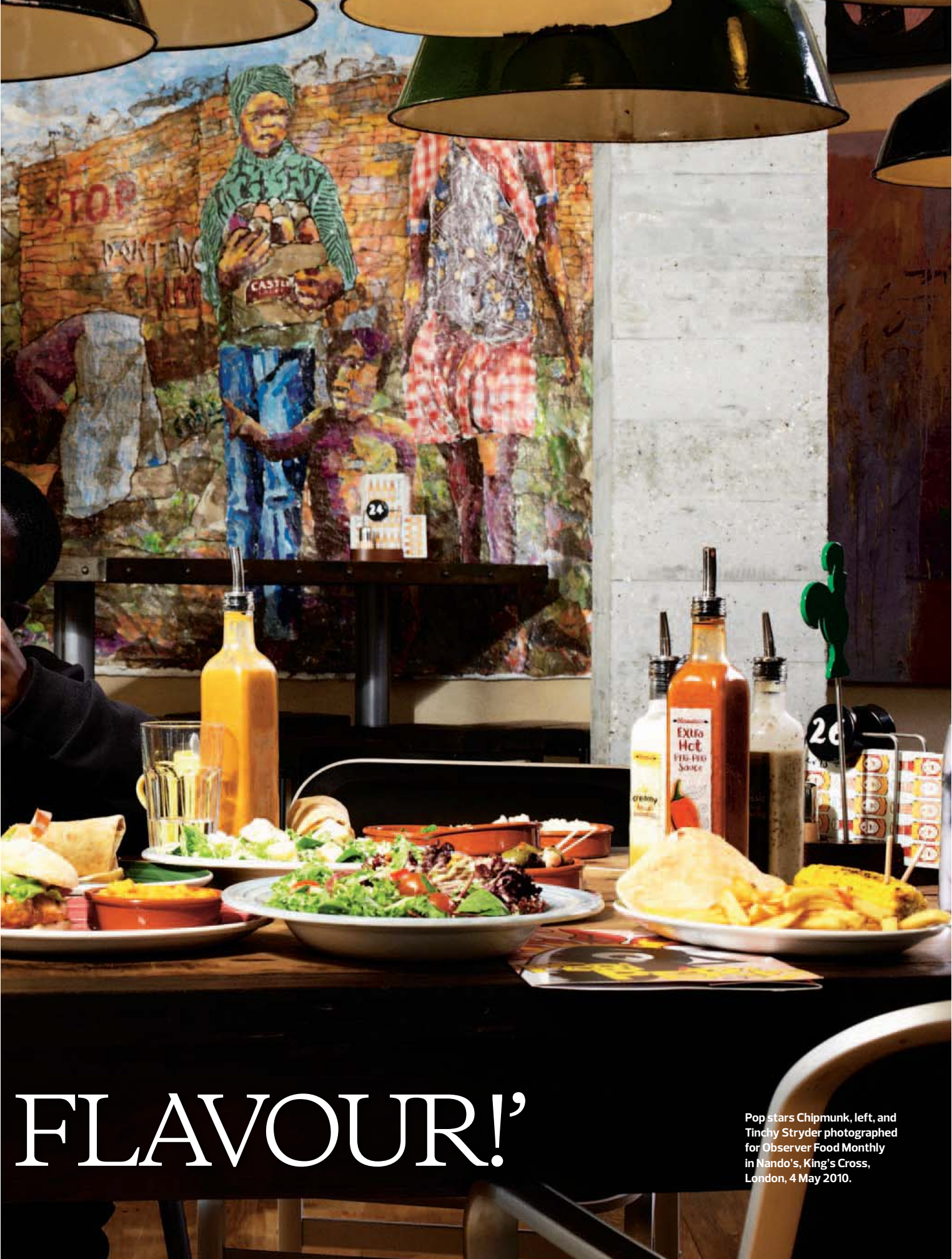




PHOTOGRAPH Chris Floyd

From JLS to Jay-Z, David Beckham to Robert Pattinson, everyone eats at Nando's. It's the spicy chicken joint that has become symbolic of modern, multicultural Britain. So how did a South African chain become the fastest-growing fast food business in the UK? *Miranda Sawyer* reports

'IT'S HOT! IT'S GOT



FLAVOUR!

Pop stars Chipmunk, left, and Tinchy Stryder photographed for Observer Food Monthly in Nando's, King's Cross, London, 4 May 2010.

The time is 7.30pm on a Wednesday, and the place is Shepherd's Bush, west London. All along the Uxbridge Road, small, overlit counters-in-a-cupboard offer you takeaway evening meals. If you're on the lookout for gristle on a stick, or deep-fried nearly-meat and soggy chips, it's your lucky night. If not, keep walking west until you see the friendly red logo, the neon Portuguese rooster of Nando's.

Inside, you'll see that the restaurant is busy, but the waitress finds you a spot. Who else is eating? On a large table at the back is a sprawling collection of friends: some baseball-hatted teenagers, some mums and dads. Thirtysomethings Duran and Yvonne are among them. Duran likes Nando's hot chicken because "it reminds me of Caribbean food". Yvonne approves of the low prices, loves the corn on the cob and likes her chicken medium, not too spicy. "And you get your food quick!"

Nearby sits Sandro, 22, the cashier, who has just clocked off. He's from Portugal, is studying in England and has been working here for a year and a half. Now he trains new staff. "The standards are very important – customer service, the cooking and serving. I like working with the customers, even when it's very busy, like when there is football."

Right by the window sit students Asha and Faiza, in their early 20s, their beautifully made-up eyes set off by their hijabs. This is their first time in Nando's and they're impressed: "I had the chicken burger," says Asha, "it was very flavoured, not like the usual plain chicken burger. I'm going to bring my daughter here." Faiza likes the background music and how "they make it warm and friendly, it's not X-rated for kids and it's affordable for families. I don't want to leave!"

I go right around the restaurant, but no one has any complaints. And the food is making me hungry. The photographer and I go to the counter to order. There are two community police officers there, who tell me they often pick up a Nando's takeaway when they work. "The chicken is healthier than all that fried stuff. You don't get grease on your uniform."

Do you go to Nando's? Of course you do. Only those who never let a non-organic French fry pass their lips or who live a long way from a town or are hardcore multinational refuseniks don't go to Nando's. Without fanfare or advertising, Nando's has woven itself into the fabric of UK society over the past few years, popping up on high streets across the country to serve everyone from happy families to lunching workers, from gagging teens to dating couples. Even the locally minded who campaign against Nando's arrival (London's Stoke Newingtonians comes to mind) seem to go quiet once it's established: it's a safe place for teenagers to go, and they want to hang out there.

The under-21s are not often welcomed into restaurants and invited to stay. Nando's, however, is relaxed about its teen-appeal and even encourages it, by offering free refills of fizzy drinks. And it's this, as well as its food, that has led to young celebrities, such as pop stars Chipmunk, Tinchy





Stryder, JLS, N-Dubz and Pixie Lott, being spotted in Nando's. They don't mind: they all love Nando's and are happy to say so – as are other, more stately celebs, including David Beckham, Mary J Blige, Oprah Winfrey, Ricky Gervais and Jay-Z (who asked for Nando's chicken on his rider at the Brit awards).

So many of the UK's young and famous are pro-Nando's that the pap snap of a celeb clutching its red-lettered take-out bag has become a tabloid staple. The brand is now inextricably linked with a certain type of youthful, racially mixed, urban British pop star and, so, with modern, inner-city, multicultural Britain. It even tastes new. Far from the tasteless stodge of traditional UK food, American bland-burgers or no-offence Italian pasta and pizza, Nando's food is spicy, with roots in Africa and, therefore, the West Indies. "How would I persuade your mum to go Nando's?" says 19-year-old rapper Chipmunk, real name Jah-maal Fyffe. "I'd just tell her: good chicken. It's hot. It's got flavour."

Chicken is what Nando's does. Decent chicken – not organic, but not frozen, nor reconstituted, battery-farmed or pumped full of chemicals either – cooked in front of you, as quick as you like. Chicken that comes extra hot, hot, medium or lemon and herb (also mango and lime, or plain,

The brand is now inextricably linked with a type of youthful, racially mixed, urban British pop star

but everyone forgets about those). Each piece, even the plain, is marinated in spicy peri-peri sauce for 24 hours before it's grilled, the sauce made from a recipe based on the Portuguese *Galinha à Africana* method of barbecuing chicken. You can have your chicken as a quarter, half, whole or wings, with one or two regular sides, such as corn on the cob and coleslaw, or a *fino* side (ratatouille – ugh!). If you want chips, you can choose between regular and the very popular hot chips, sizzled with peri-peri. Add spicy or garlic sauce as you wish. And that's it. There are other ways to eat your bird – in a pitta, as a burger, in a wrap, as a salad – but most people plump for the straightforward barbecue-plus-sides offer.

Enough chicken for you? Well, no, actually. It seems that, as a nation, we want more and more. In the past few months, Nando's has taken advantage of the cheaper property market and expanded aggressively in London, opening in Westfield shopping centre, on the South Bank, in King's Cross. Outside London, it has opened in Belfast, Thurrock and Glasgow. There are now 220 Nando's in the UK, in every large town from Edinburgh to Exeter, serving 800,000 customers every week. Even if some of those customers visit every day, and some just opt for a salad, that is a lot of Nandinos – and a lot of chicken. >>

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Nando's is one of a few modern restaurant brands to have changed the face of British fast food. In recent years the Gourmet Burger Kitchen, promoting its Aberdeen Angus beef and use of Peter Gordon, the father of fusion cuisine, as a consultant, and Wagamama, with its fresh, fast pan-Asian food, are others. All promote just one part of that "fast" deal, in that they serve you fast, but they don't push you out the door at the same speed. No one is saying they're a foodie's paradise but they all offer healthier options than the usual take-out joints. As Jamie Oliver pointed out recently, these days the UK is far less tolerant of rubbishy food than the US. Even McDonald's in the UK has busily revamped its offer – its eggs are free-range, it uses organic milk and its adverts constantly remind you that carrot sticks are on offer (one of your five-a-day, kids!).

So is that Nando's secret? That it isn't your usual takeaway joint? Does that explain its popularity? Ask the PR team – which consists of just two people, one of whom is on maternity leave – and you'll be guided to the chain's "family feel". This is Nando's professed USP. Yes, it prides itself on its spicy chicken, but it's the friendly atmosphere, both for workers and clientele, that keeps its fans loyal. Customers know what they're getting, which is: quick, smiley service, clean surfaces, big tables you can spread out over, South African art on the wall (Nando's commissions original works). There is always lively African or Latino music playing, which helps cover your embarrassment if you have noisy kids. Yet, each Nando's is very different architecturally, adding to that non-standardised, proper restaurant feel. The South Bank branch has high, arched ceilings; King's Cross has an outdoor space; Brixton is wide and low.

The way customers are encouraged to act is different, too. There's an element of responsibility, in that you have to go to the counter to order (although the waiting staff bring your food over and everyone on your table is served at the same time), and you help yourself to your own cutlery, fizzy drinks and sauces. All this moving about helps create a fluid, busy atmosphere – but you can stay as long as you like.

As for the staff, the PR assures me that Nando's is keen to offer its workers opportunities to advance themselves, many grillers and waiters moving up the ranks to managerial status. There are away days and other social events, and the company won the *Sunday Times* Best Place to Work (Big Companies) category this year, with 75% of the human resources budget invested in learning and development. Staff are young (65% under 25 in 2005), but staff turnover is low.

All too good to be true? Maybe. Though it opened in the UK way back in 1992, Nando's still feels like the new kid on the block. It has taken its time to make an impression and we're still excited by it, not bored yet. Still it's no stranger to bad press: the most serious being when one customer was shot by another, in this very Shepherd's Bush branch, in 2002. The victim subsequently died.

In Shepherd's Bush, at the counter, I ask >>

'When I wake up the first thing I eat is chicken and pitta. I don't like cold food in the morning'



Peri-peri chicken and chips with macho peas and coleslaw, Photograph by Romas Foord for the Observer

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the community officers about the shooting. One shrugs. "It's a terrible thing," he says, "but it's not Nando's fault. It could have been anywhere. It's not like the guy was shot for his chicken, was he?"

Nando's origins lie much further afield than west London: not in Portugal, but in South Africa. In 1987, Robert Brozin and his friend Fernando Duarte popped into a Johannesburg restaurant called Chickenland. The chicken was the best they'd ever tasted, they thought, and promptly bought the joint. They renamed it Nando's, after Fernando, a Portuguese national.

Despite its hoo-ha about happy staff and customer service, it's Nando's peri-peri sauce that is its basic selling point. It's a version of the piri-piri marinade used on chicken in Portuguese restaurants the world over, which was created by Portuguese settlers in Africa: they used local chillis (Nando's favours chillis from Mozambique), known as pili-pili in Swahili. Now you can buy Nando's hot sauces and marinades in supermarkets, as well as Nando's crisps. One happy online user described the marinades thus: "Turns ordi-

'Even though you do get posh people in Nando's, it doesn't outlaw any social class'

Former Skins star Nicholas Hoult tucks in.
Photograph by Richard Saker for the Observer

nary, boring, everyday chicken into a Festival of Chicken, complete with chicken-skin streamers and party giblets". Mmm.

In Nando's in Soho, at lunchtime, I meet Matt, 39, and Bryan, 24. They work in documentary photography and have been to Nando's in Africa. What's the difference? Bryan thinks that the London Nando's are "a little louder, bigger and more open. And a little more uppity [upmarket]." But, really, says Matt, "it's pretty much the same. You can count on it being consistently good."

Differences do exist. In South Africa, Nando's is seen as more of a takeaway; it wasn't until Nando's in the UK began to emphasise its restaurants over its take-outs that the brand really took off here. Now around 80% of its food is eaten in. Also, in South Africa, as in Australia, another huge Nando's market, Nando's is marketed as a jokey brand. It does a lot of TV advertising, and its ads are often reprimanded as being in poor taste: a 2009 campaign featuring a *Spitting Image*-style puppet of Julius Malema, president of the ANC youth league, was removed at the behest of Malema's lawyers. Actually, to my eyes, the ads are dodgy, with black Africans often represented as being stupid or naive.

In contrast, in the UK, Nando's has almost no advertising presence at all. I ask Malcolm Pinkerton, a retail analyst at Datamonitor Group, why it hasn't bothered. "Prime locations appeal to people without having to advertise," he says. "Then, if you have a good product, you can rely on word of mouth and social media." Nando's has a strong Facebook presence: there are campaigns for Nando's to open in their particular area (Wigan, Peterborough, Northwich, Burton-on-Trent) and former workers have groups, too.

What's unique about Nando's in the UK, however, is its status with the city youth. Over the past few years, the UK charts have been transformed by British-born urban pop artists, such as Chipmunk, Tinchy Stryder, Dizzee Rascal, N-Dubz, JLS, Taio Cruz... and every one of these No 1 artists is a Nando's lover. They would be, even if they weren't successful. They are typical Nando's customers, with parents or grandparents born outside the UK who have brought up their offspring to have a spicier palate. Social and confident, happy to hang out with mates, these kids are easy with eating out and expect to be treated well when they do. Nando's ticks all their boxes. Now, its chicken is the urban youth food of choice and, as if to prove it, I have two quite intense phone conversations about Nando's, with Chipmunk and then Tulisa from N-Dubz.

Chipmunk, born in Edmonton, north London and named best hip-hop artist at last year's Mobo awards, tells me he often eats at his local branch of Nando's in Finsbury Park. He favours the wings, medium spicy: "It's the closest thing you can get to jerk chicken, and if chicken isn't Caribbean or Nando's, I can't mess with it." He likes the atmosphere, how the staff are always smiling, and that "you can eat your chicken with your hands. It's not too booji [bourgeois]. Even though you do get posh people in Nando's, it doesn't outlaw any social class." ➤➤



**Fresh British Asparagus.
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...you are.**



While researching this piece, I'd heard stories about a Nando's "gold card", awarded to a very small number of extra-special customers and entitling them to free meals. This mythical piece of plastic is so valued, so sought after that, initially, Nando's PR would not confirm its actual existence. It turned out they've been having problems with people faking the cards, or passing the cards between each other.

Chipmunk, though, along with Tinchy Stryder, is one of the privileged few. "Yeah, I got one!" he says with glee. "It's not gold, it's black with gold writing, and it means I can get food for free for me and four friends. I don't pay 'cos I love Nando's and I promote Nando's and I'm happy to do it."

Tulisa Contostavlos, 21, Camden Town-born actress and singer with double-platinum hip-hop influenced pop group N-Dubz, however, does not have a card. Which seems ridiculous, given just how often she eats there. I interview her in the middle of the N-Dubz national tour and she appears to spend most of her off-stage time in Nando's.

"When I wake up, say around 1 o'clock, the first thing I eat is Nando's lemon and herb chicken in pitta," she tells me. "I don't like cold food in the morning: I'd rather warm up last night's curry and have it for breakfast. I like the texture of the chicken, it's not too crispy, not too soggy. Anyway, I put some peri-peri sauce in there and I might pop in a few chips. And then, when dinner time comes, I have a quarter lemon and herb chicken with spicy rice. And chips – normal, not spicy. You have to get ketchup – one teaspoon per chip. I drink Sprite with it. Even when we're not on tour I eat there at least once a week. I should have my picture on the wall."

She is very jealous of Chipmunk's Nando's card and, in fact, this causes some problems: after the interview, we ask if we can set up a photograph and N-Dubz's people say: "Only if the band



The mythical gold card is so valued, Nando's initially deny its existence

From top: Chipmunk and Tinchy Stryder with their gold cards (disguised here on Nando's orders); customers Asha and Faisal in Shepherd's Bush; Kenneth Ko and family in Brixton. Right, Tulisa from N-Dubz.



can get Nando's cards." But Nando's PR denies such cards even exist. I point out that Chipmunk has described his to me and Tulisa has seen it, and she then counters that there's a waiting list. Hmm. No card, no photograph. Such is the value of this particular piece of plastic. And we are asked not to photograph Chipmunk's card – to stop the fakes out there.

It's interesting that so many black and mixed-race kids are into Nando's: that combination of spicy, almost jerk, chicken and the space and respect each customer is given is a winning formula for the kind of people that most restaurants choose to ignore. When I talk to customers in Shepherd's Bush, Soho and Brixton, the only other plus that comes up a lot is health. The chicken in Nando's is deemed by its fans to be better for you than anything from your standard fast food restaurant. But is it? It's not battery-farmed, but it's not free-range either. The suppliers that Nando's use – Faccenda and Sun Valley for everyday chicken, halal from Freemans of Newent and Highbury Poultry – comply with the voluntary, industry-led assured chicken protection standards. Nando's also gets some extra chicken breasts from suppliers that meet similar standards in Holland and Germany. Essentially, the chickens are reared in well-littered and ventilated houses and have constant access to water and food that isn't spiked with growth promoters.

Nando's say that their chicken is in constant review and they are actively looking at alternative methods of production, including RSPCA Freedom Foods. The problem is price: the amount of chicken Nando's needs and the price it charges (£9.10 for half a chicken with two regular sides) means that, for the moment, organic just isn't an option.

I think of Nando's with more affection than I do of, say, Starbucks: if I'm in an unfamiliar city with my son and I see Nando's, I'm pleased – we can both eat food we like, relatively cheaply and definitely cheerfully. But if I have a choice between Nando's and my local Portuguese restaurant, there's no contest: Brazas will always win out. Nando's is a nice experience, but it's a standardised one, and my tolerance for same-same is lower than Tulisa's.

What of the future? Capricorn Ventures, which owns Nando's in the UK, is promising to expand even further, declaring that Britain can support up to 400 branches. Two Nando's have opened in Washington DC, to great excitement. Robert Pattinson is rumoured to be beefing himself up for his next *Twilight* film by eating Nando's. It's a chicken-fuelled world out there, people.

In Nando's in Brixton, Robert and Jameela are having an early evening meal. Robert is a regular. "I like my chicken twice a week. Always medium, with peri-peri chips and coleslaw on the side." Jameela: "I don't come as much as Robert, but I look forward to it when I do. I love Nando's! Why? No special reason. Just that the chicken tastes so good." **OFM**



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Nigel Slater



Raspberry syllabub,
see page 33.

10 SIMPLE SUMMER RECIPES

by Nigel Slater

Maximum taste with minimal effort; refreshing recipes from Britain's best-loved food writer

PHOTOGRAPHS *Jonathan Lovekin*



A green panzanella for early
summer, see page 26.



Throughout the summer I find it useful to have a few recipes to hand that I cook regularly. Recipes that are just as useful for an everyday supper as they are for a larger meal when friends gather round the table. The only thing that they have in common is that they contain the very essence of the season: a casual lunch of chicken baked in creme fraiche with a refreshing cucumber salad; a sea bass with anchovies and rosemary; a vivid green salad or perhaps a rich raspberry syllabub. Simple, straightforward cooking for the lazy days of summer.

A GREEN PANZANELLA FOR EARLY SUMMER

This is a pared down version of the classic bread salad panzanella kept simple to highlight the early summer vegetables. Use the recipe as a base to add any other seasonings you wish, such as capers, olives, caperberries or crushed anchovies. As the summer progresses I tend to add more garlic, and then revert to the more traditional interpretation with tomatoes and peppers in place of the green vegetables.

SERVES 4

peas 200g (podded weight)
broad beans 500g (podded weight)
young fennel 150g
spring onions 4 slim ones
cucumber (optional) half
bread firm and white, 120g
garlic half a clove
olive oil 6 tbsp
red wine vinegar 2 tbsp

DIRECTIONS

Put a large pan of water on to boil. Salt it lightly then cook the peas in it for 3-4 minutes. Lift them out with a draining spoon. Cool the peas in a colander under cold running water then add the broad beans to the boiling water. Cook for 4-5 minutes until tender then drain and remove the skins. Cool under running water then add to the peas.

Shred the fennel finely and put in a bowl. Trim and finely chop the spring onions and add to the fennel. Peel and chop the cucumber, if you are using it, and add to the spring onions.

Toast the bread then slice or tear it into pieces and place in a large serving bowl. Sprinkle water over the surface. Peel and very finely chop the garlic and put in a small bowl with a little salt, black pepper, the oil and vinegar.

Toss the peas and beans (and cucumber if you are using it) with the dressing then tip on top of the bread.



Asparagus with goat's cheese.

ASPARAGUS WITH GOAT'S CHEESE

SERVES 4

asparagus 24 spears

For the dressing:

yoghurt 300ml
flat-leaf parsley 4 bushy sprigs
tarragon 6 sprigs
firm goat's cheese 150g

DIRECTIONS

Boil or steam the asparagus for 9 or 10 minutes till tender. While it is cooking, put the yoghurt in a bowl and season with black pepper. Chop the leaves from the herbs and stir in. Crumble the goat's cheese into small pieces and add to the yoghurt. Serve with the asparagus.

The only thing these recipes have in common is that they contain the essence of the season

WARM BEETROOT AND ONION SALAD

Not exactly a pickle or a tracklement, and not even really a salad, this is nevertheless a very fine accompaniment to have with a few slices of cold chicken, beef or pork. And it will work very well with cheese, too.

SERVES 2 AS A SIDEDISH

small onions or large shallots 250g
extra virgin olive oil 2 tbsp
vermouth 100ml
sultanas 2 tbsp
water 4 tbsp
bay leaves 2
rosemary a bushy sprig
beetroot 2 large, roasted – see recipe below





Baked peaches with
maple syrup and vanilla,
see page 33.

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NN-CF778S, Feb 2010

DIRECTIONS

Put a small pan of water on to boil. Peel the onions and drop into the water. Boil for 15-20 minutes until they show signs of tenderness then drain them.

Warm the olive oil in a shallow pan. Tip in the drained onions and leave to colour lightly on all sides, turning them now and again. Add the vermouth – take care, it may spit – and bring to a simmer. Stir in the sultanas, water, bay leaves, and the rosemary needles finely chopped. Simmer for 10 minutes then introduce the beetroot, cut into thick wedges from root to tip. Once it has warmed through, turn off the heat and leave for 15 minutes or so, then serve warm or at room temperature.

To roast beetroot in their skins

Wrap beetroot, wet from washing, in foil. Put in a roasting tin and bake on a low heat for 2 hours or so, until the flesh is tender, and sweet. Peel before serving.

CHICKEN WITH MUSTARD AND CREME FRAICHE

A light but rich main course to have with the olive and cucumber salad.

SERVES 4

chicken thighs 4

creme fraiche 250ml

grain mustard 2-3 heaped tbsp

garlic cloves 2, crushed

pancetta or **bacon in the piece** 150g

thyme 3 or 4 small sprigs

DIRECTIONS

Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6. Put the chicken thighs in an ovenproof dish. Put the creme fraiche in a mixing bowl with the mustard, crushed garlic, a little salt and black pepper. Pull the thyme leaves from their stalks and add them to the creme fraiche.

Cut the pancetta into short, thick strips then fry in a non-stick pan until the fat is golden. Mix with the sauce then spoon over the chicken. Bake for 35 minutes until the sauce is bubbling and the chicken skin is nicely coloured.

OLIVE AND CUCUMBER SALAD

SERVES 4

small cucumber

stoned green olives 100g

flat-leaf parsley a small bunch

lemon zest 1 tsp

lemon juice 2 tbsp

olive oil 3 tbsp



Chicken with mustard and creme fraiche; olive and cucumber salad, top.

DIRECTIONS

Peel the cucumber, halve it along its length then scrape out the seeds with a teaspoon. Slice the cucumber thickly, then put in a serving bowl with the halved olives. Pull the leaves from the parsley (you will need a couple of handfuls) and add to the cucumber.

Mix the lemon zest, juice and oil, grind in a little salt then toss with the cucumber. Serve with the chicken above.

SMOKED SALMON WITH STEAMED POTATO SALAD WITH LEMON AND TOASTED PARMESAN

I say waxy potatoes, but any small, young potato will work well. I use a mixture, but pink fir apple are especially suitable. I shall leave the quantity of salmon up to you.

SERVES 4

Smoked salmon for four
young waxy-fleshed potatoes 750g
extra virgin olive oil 3 tbsp
flat-leaf parsley a good handful
a lemon grated zest and juice
grated parmesan 6 tbsp

DIRECTIONS

Wash the potatoes and rub well with your thumb to remove any loose flakes of skin. Pile them into a colander or steamer basket and place over a suitably sized pan of boiling water. Cover the colander with a lid and let the potatoes steam for 10-20 minutes or so, checking them with a skewer regularly.

Meanwhile, make the dressing by putting the oil, chopped parsley and lemon zest and juice, salt and pepper in a small jar with a lid. Screw the cap on tight then shake to mix.

Put the parmesan in a single layer on a baking sheet. Get an overhead grill hot, then let the cheese cook under it till pale gold. (Keep an eye on it – at first it will take ages then suddenly it will brown in seconds.)

Remove potatoes from the heat and slice each one in half lengthways. Toss gently in the lemon and parsley dressing then dust with the grated, toasted parmesan. Serve with the salmon.

BAKED SEA BASS WITH ROSEMARY AND CAPERS

A whole baked fish for a summer's day.

SERVES 2

small sea bass 2, cleaned
new potatoes 500g



Smoked salmon with steamed potato salad.

Any small, young potato will work. I leave the quantity of salmon up to you

olive oil
rosemary 4 bushy sprigs
a long, hot red chilli
sherry vinegar 1tbsp
capers 1tbsp, rinsed
small lemon juice of 1
garlic 2 cloves
parsley 4 large sprigs

DIRECTIONS

Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6. Rinse the fish and wipe them dry with paper towels.

Peel the potatoes then cut into thin slices, about the thickness of a £1 coin. Warm a couple of tablespoons of olive oil in a large shallow pan or roasting tin set over a moderate to low heat and

slide in the potatoes, letting them cook slowly, until their edges are starting to colour – a matter of 10 minutes. Stir and turn them over now and again, so they don't stick to the tin.

As the potatoes cook, make the dressing: remove the needles from the rosemary sprigs, chop them finely then put them into a mixing bowl. Halve the chilli lengthways, scrape out and discard the seeds, then chop the flesh finely. Add to the rosemary with the sherry vinegar, rinsed capers, lemon juice and a grinding of black pepper. Peel and finely chop the garlic, remove and chop the leaves from the parsley, then stir both into the dressing with 3 tablespoons of olive oil.

When the potatoes are ready, stir ➤

A flavour of summer

For a true taste of the British countryside you need to grab a hamper, a blanket and head outdoors. To inspire you, here's a list of five outstanding picnic spots, along with a food and drink selection for each location

The Jane Austen picnic:

Box Hill, near Dorking, Surrey

This beautiful spot of sweeping downs and flitting butterflies has an additional allure for literary romantics. It was the location for the famous picnic scene in the film of Jane Austen's Emma, and it was chosen for its idyllic rolling hills.

The food: pack a hamper full of delightfully girlish treats, with plenty of colourful desserts. Delicate sandwiches of smoked salmon, and egg and cress alongside pink-hued cakes, pastries and dainty iced biscuits should bring out the feminine side of any picnic goer. Then toast with pomegranate and raspberry Fruitiser for a picnic Austen herself could have penned.



Box Hill: an inspiration for Jane Austen's Emma

The great outdoors picnic:

Brownsea Island, Poole, Dorset

Brownsea Island was the birthplace of scouting, and has subsequently been made a stunning reserve of plants and wildlife. Latter-day scouts will enjoy trekking through the wilderness, following trails and cliff-top walks. Picnic goers can decamp in various spots along the route, but to work up a healthy appetite heading to the cliffs affords some of the most scenic locations.

The food: with a rugged natural setting, a traditional picnic is the best way to refuel hungry hikers. Prepare a feast of boiled eggs, thick-cut ham sandwiches, cheese rolls, and hand-cooked potato chips. Throw in some fruit and chunky chocolate bars for dessert, and rehydrate with delicious classic Appletiser.

for budding explorers. Get the kids to make their own colourful biscuits, and homemade pizza slices with healthy toppings. Add chocolate coins for buried treasure and use plenty of crazy straws to serve thirsty adventurers classic Appletiser.

The teddy bear's picnic:

Aldenham Country Park, Hertfordshire

Younger picnic goers will love recreating the teddy bear's picnic at Aldenham Country Park, where a storybook woodland has been recreated, complete with the homes of various characters scattered among the trees. It's a great way to explore the forest, especially with young children, and there are plenty of picnic spots for families to break out the snacks and take a break.

The food: have fun preparing a real-life teddy bear's picnic with plenty of honey and unsalted butter sandwiches. Pack "pigs in blankets" by keeping hotdogs hot in a flask and serving them in hotdog buns. Add fairy cakes with character toppers if you can get them and a splash of 100% fruit juice Peartiser to wash it all down.



The beach barbecue picnic:

Barafundle beach, Pembrokeshire

This lovely quiet beach enjoys golden sands and clean clear waters. Huddled into a secluded bay, picnics are spared the usual wind-chill factor, while an array of rock pools and hidden caves make for additional entertainment.

The food: pre-prepare an exotic beach barbecue picnic. Grill whole fish in their skins and serve with a cold salad of couscous and roasted vegetables. Make your own tapenade or tzatziki dips for corn chips, and enjoy with iced glasses of mango and mandarin Fruitiser.


Complements food beautifully

The adventurer's picnic:

Brockhole, Lake District, Cumbria

For the ultimate outdoor adventure, it has to be the Lake District. At Brockhole, overlooking Windermere, there are 30 acres of gardens running down to the lakeshore and an adventure playground packed with everything from scramble nets to zip wires. Kids can storm the wooden fort or captain the shipwrecked boat while the adults relax at the nearby picnic tables.

The food: make an adventure picnic



COMPLEMENTS FOOD BEAUTIFULLY

If you've decided to enjoy the UK's great outdoors, then a bottle or two of Appletiser, Peartiser or Fruitiser is the perfect accompaniment.

As a great alternative to alcohol, their flavour nuances can be matched to whatever you're eating, with the added advantage of 100% pure fruit juice bursting with antioxidants and vitamins. A 150ml serving even counts as one of your five-a-day. The naturally sweet fruit juices means there is none of the sugary drawbacks of some other soft drinks. The Appletiser family boasts naturally occurring fruit sugars, this means the drink enjoys the low GI-index associated with steady blood sugar and healthy weight management. The steady energy release makes it great for physical fitness too, so if you're out in the British countryside, sipping Appletiser can help keep you full of energy. And with four flavours to choose from the versatile soft drink can be paired with everything from main courses to desserts.



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them again, then lay the fish on top and spoon over the dressing, tucking as much of it as possible into the open belly. Bake for about 25 minutes till the fish is tender, opaque and just cooked through to the bone.

Serve the fish by cutting off the head and tail (you can do it with a spoon) then lifting the fish on to hot plates. Divide the potatoes between the plates and serve immediately.

BAKED PEACHES WITH MAPLE SYRUP AND VANILLA

SERVES 4

ripe peaches 4

maple syrup 4 tbsp

vanilla seeds a pinch, contents of one pod
juice of one lime

DIRECTIONS

Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6. Wipe the peaches and slice them in half. Discard the stones and place the fruit, cut side up, in a shallow baking dish.

Put the syrup in a bowl with the vanilla seeds and the lime juice. Mix well then pour over the peaches. Bake for approximately 35 minutes till the peaches are tender. It is good to baste the fruit from time to time as it cooks.

ELDERFLOWER FRITTERS

You need a really light batter or the lacy effect of the flowers is lost. The batter barely covers them and cooks particularly quickly, leaving the fritters to come out light and crisp, the batter clinging to them gently. For a more robust batter, use a little more flour.

SERVES 4

elderflowers 16 large ones

For the batter:

plain flour 100g

sunflower oil 2 tbsp

sparkling mineral water 175ml

caster sugar 1tbsp

egg white

oil for deep drying

a plate thickly dusted with caster sugar

DIRECTIONS

Sift the flour into a large basin then add the oil and water beating slowly to a thick paste, then stir in the sugar. Set aside for 30 minutes. Don't be tempted to skip the resting time, this is essential for a light batter. Just before you plan to fry the elderflowers, beat the egg white and fold it gently into the batter.

Wash the elderflowers thoroughly

Push down on the stem. The batter will bubble up around the flowers like little pearls

by leaving them to soak in a sink of cold water. This will not affect their flavour and they are easy to shake dry. Make certain that there are no aphids hiding among the flowers. When you are certain that they are clean, get the oil on to heat up. Snip the flowerheads into small stems.

Test the oil to make sure it is hot enough – it should send a cube of bread golden in seconds – then dip the elderflowers into the batter and lower them into the hot oil. Keep them under the oil by pushing down on the stem. The batter will bubble up around the flowers like little pearls. Fry until the batter is pale gold and crisp then lift out of the fat and dip straight into the caster sugar. Eat the fritters while they are hot and crisp.

RASPBERRY SYLLABUB

SERVES 4

a lemon grated zest and juice

sweet wine 60ml

double cream 300ml

raspberries 150g

caster sugar 2tbsp, heaped

DIRECTIONS

Grate the lemon into the bowl of the food mixer, squeeze in its juice then

add the sugar and sweet wine. Leave to steep in the fridge (it is important the bowl is kept cold) for a couple of hours or, better still, overnight.

Use a large balloon whisk or electric mixer and slowly beat in the cream getting right to the bottom of the mixture. Stop when the cream will sit in thick, soft, billowing folds. If you take it too far it will become grainy and separate. Crush the berries with a fork and fold into the mixture, leaving a trail throughout the cream rather than stirring it in completely. Spoon into chilled glasses and leave for half an hour in the fridge before serving.

COFFEE GRANITA

It sounds odd, a sorbet topped with whipped cream, but in this case the dairy addition is essential to form some sort of balance. The soft, smooth-tasting cream is a perfect contrast to the crystalline texture and keep-you-up-all-night quality of the granita. I give myself quite a bit of time to make this classically Roman end to a meal as it takes a while to freeze by hand. Should you use an ice-cream maker, you will end up with a smooth coffee sorbet which will be delicious but will lack the granular texture of true granita.

SERVES 4

still mineral water 300ml

sugar 150g

espresso coffee 350ml, hot

softly whipped cream to serve

DIRECTIONS

Bring the water to the boil then add the sugar and stir till dissolved. You have produced a light sugar syrup. Pour in the coffee and leave to cool, then chill thoroughly in the fridge.

Place a metal or plastic box in the freezer. When it is very cold, pour in the coffee syrup and leave in the freezer for a good hour. Remove and stir the ice crystals that have formed around the edge into the liquid middle and return to the freezer. Leave for 45 minutes to an hour then repeat, folding the frozen edges into the centre. Continue this, every hour or so, until you have a box of frozen, coffee-coloured ice crystals.

Whip the cream until it lies in soft folds.

Divide the granita between four chilled glasses (the ice melts quickly, so don't skip the step of getting your glasses thoroughly cold), then spoon on the whipped cream. **OFM**
nigel.slater@observer.co.uk



Coffee granita.



Chilled sweet pea
and watercress
soup with rose petal
cream, see page 38.

Another fine mezze

Silvena Rowe, author of a stunning new book on eastern Mediterranean food reveals why no one makes rice or baklava better than her. Except, maybe, her father

Had Bulgaria's communist government got its way we might never have had Silvena Rowe's new cookbook, a deliciously hungry journey charting the Ottoman influence on the food of the eastern Mediterranean. Like so many ethnic Turks, Rowe's father, a highly regarded newspaper editor, Bulgarianised his name. But in the kitchen at home he remained Turkish. "My father would come back from work for lunch and cook the most amazing things," Rowe says. "Börek of thinly sliced aubergine sandwiching cheese, then deep fried, or of course the baklava, which he had learnt from my grandmother."

And which, in three styles – including walnut and rose water, and almond and apricot – she now gifts to us in *Purple Citrus & Sweet Perfume*. The book is vivid, dramatic, irrepressible, much like its author. Rowe, who first came to Britain as a teenager in the 80s to follow her English husband-to-be, is a striking six-footer, with a plume of spiky peroxide hair, a rich, musical accent and a tidy line in enthusiasm. "I was looking at my roots," she says, "and I realised I was a lot more Turkish or Arabic than anything else. My favourite food is stuffed vine leaves, it is grilled lamb and baklava. It is not the borscht that people >>



Chicken liver, potato and chilli salad, see page 36.

INTERVIEW Jay Rayner

PHOTOGRAPHS Jonathan Lovekin

Summer mezze

associate with Bulgaria.” As a result she set out on a journey. “Bulgaria was ruled by the Ottomans for five centuries so it is no surprise the food is so Turkish.” She travelled to Lebanon and Jordan, following the route of the imperial power, collecting recipes as she went.

Though now established on the food media circuit, with regular TV appearances on *Saturday Kitchen* and involvement at various restaurants as consultant or executive chef, she admits that hers has been a curious, meandering journey, driven mostly by appetite. “I have always been a very greedy person,” she says. “As a child if I sent a postcard from holiday it was never about the view, it was always about the menu.” Back in the 80s, newly married in London, she set about recreating the flavours of home at dinner parties. In classically combative style she says: “I soon realised that even people who didn’t like me were still coming to my house to eat.” One of those who did like her put her up for a Channel 4 food show, *Chef on the Night*. Her appearance led to work as a private chef and in turn to a position in the small kitchen at *Books for Cooks*, the cookbook shop in London’s Notting Hill. “That,” she says simply, “was the making of me.”

Being surrounded by so many cookbooks for three years would have been enough to put most people off writing one of their own. Even so, in 2006 she published *Feasts*, about food for sharing from eastern and central Europe. It won a Glenfiddich award for best cookbook. “Collecting that award was my Gwyneth Paltrow moment because I wept so much,” she says. “It seemed a remarkable thing to have happened.”

The new book is a major step up from that, and has already led to her being compared to Claudia Roden, the doyenne of Mediterranean food. Shot lavishly in Istanbul by Jonathan Lovekin, it is as much artefact as book, every page filled with a palette of turquoise and ruby red, purple and blue. “I wanted to stick away from all the Turkish clichés. So no toothless old ladies selling bunches of herbs. No fishermen. No shitting seagulls.” Instead sumac, the purple berry with an aromatic citrus flavour, appears regularly, as do pomegranates and lots of flowers. “Only at the end did I realise that 35% of the recipes use flowers in some way or another, be they rose petals or nasturtiums, hibiscus, thyme or chive flowers.” She insists, however, that all these recipes are doable at home, the ingredients (or perfect substitutes) quickly found.

I ask her to identify which key recipes sum up the book. She flicks proudly through its pages. “There is this onemý perdeli pilaf with duck confit, raisins and pine nuts.” She glances up. “No one makes better rice than me.” She turns to the back. “And of course there is my Istanbul orange and vanilla baklava. The book would not have been complete without that. For me it is the memory of my dad.” It seems we have a lot to thank her father for. **OFM**



Baklava queen,
Silvena Rowe.

CHICKEN LIVER, POTATO AND CHILLI SALAD

SERVES 4–6

potatoes 2 large, peeled

olive oil 4 tbsp

chicken livers 400g

small lemon zest and juice

spring onions 8 finely sliced

fresh parsley ½ large bunch, leaves only

Aleppo chilli (or mild chilli flakes) 1 tsp

hard-boiled eggs 2 sliced

DIRECTIONS

Boil the potatoes until just cooked, then drain and leave to cool. Cut them into cubes. Meanwhile, heat a tablespoon of oil in a frying pan on a medium heat and sauté the chicken livers until cooked and golden brown. Season, cool, then roughly chop.

Place the diced potatoes, chicken livers, lemon juice and zest, spring onions and parsley in a large bowl and toss gently to combine. Season, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with the chilli flakes. Serve with the slices of egg arranged on top.

CRUNCHY RED SWISS CHARD FALAFEL

SERVES 6

olive oil 4 tbsp

red onion 1 finely chopped

ground cumin 2 tsp

ground allspice ¼ tsp

red Swiss chard 500g, roughly chopped

milk 220ml

chickpea flour 100g

cooked chickpeas 3 tbsp

lemon juice 3 tbsp

oil for deep frying



Creamy feta and
caramelised leek
filo börek.



Crunchy red Swiss chard falafel.

DIRECTIONS

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil and sauté the onion, cumin and allspice for 3–4 minutes. Set aside in a bowl.

Fill a large saucepan with water and bring to the boil. Drop in the chard and blanch for 2 minutes. Drain immediately and, once they're cool enough to handle, squeeze the leaves dry.

In a medium non-stick pan, bring the milk to the boil then reduce to a simmer. Little by little, whisk in the chickpea flour until you have a smooth paste. Keep the mixture moving to avoid lumps. Then season, add the remaining olive oil and cook on a low heat for 8 minutes, stirring all the time with a wooden spoon. Like making choux pastry, the mixture will come away from the sides of the pan and work into a ball, solidifying as it is heated.

Cool the ball of paste, then mix in the sautéed onions, chickpeas, lemon juice and blanched chard. Using your hands, mould the mixture into small balls and arrange on a tray. Chill in the fridge for a couple of hours.

In a pan, heat until very hot

enough oil to cover the falafel balls. Carefully place the falafel into the oil and cook for 3–4 minutes, until golden brown. Remove with a slotted spoon and place on kitchen paper to drain.

CREAMY FETA AND CARAMELISED LEEK FILO BOREK

MAKES 24

leeks 3 finely sliced
garlic cloves 2 crushed
sugar ½ tsp
butter 10g
olive oil 2 tbsp
chicken stock 200ml
bay leaf
feta 200g crumbled
fresh oregano 50g pack, finely chopped
filo pastry 8 sheets
melted butter for brushing
mixture hemp, poppy and black sesame seeds 2 tbsp

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 220C/gas mark 7.

Sauté the leeks, garlic and sugar in the butter and olive oil for 4–5 minutes, constantly stirring. Add the stock and bay leaf, >>

Summer mezze

and season. Cook until reduced to a mushy consistency. Take off the heat and remove the bay leaf. Once cooled, transfer the mixture to a bowl and combine with the feta cheese and oregano.

Working with one sheet of filo pastry at a time, spread it out and cut lengthwise into thirds. Keep the pastry covered with a damp tea towel while you're not using it. Each strip will make one börek.

Brush the pastry with the melted butter and place a tablespoon of filling across the corner of one end. Fold this corner up and over to form a triangle, then over again, and so on until you have a triangular pastry parcel. Repeat this process with the rest of the pastry and filling. Arrange the böreks on a tray. Brush them with more melted butter and sprinkle with the seeds. Cook in the oven for 20 minutes, until golden brown.

CHILLED SWEET PEA AND WATERCRESS SOUP WITH ROSE PETAL CREAM

SERVES 4

For the soup:

fresh watercress leaves 150g

small onion grated

water 950ml

fresh peas 900g

fresh parsley 50g pack, finely chopped

fresh thyme 50g pack, leaves only

fresh chervil 50g pack, finely chopped

ice cubes to fill a large bowl

For the cream:

red or pink roses 2 large, washed

double cream 150g

ground pink peppercorns a pinch

DIRECTIONS

To make the soup, place the watercress and onion in a saucepan and add 150ml of water. Bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for just 1 minute. Now add the peas, parsley, thyme and chervil. Pour in a further 800ml of water, season and bring back to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 3 minutes.

To stop the soup overcooking, pour it straight into a bowl and sit this in the bowl of ice cubes. Allow to cool completely, then purée in a food processor and pass through a fine sieve.



Spice scented
spring lamb
with quince and
mustard relish.

To make the cream, pick off the rose petals, wash them and put half a dozen or so to one side for the garnish. Place the rest of the petals in a food processor and purée.

Whisk the cream until thickened and add to the rose purée, season with salt and add a pinch of pink peppercorns.

Serve the soup with a dollop of the rose petal cream and scattered with the reserved rose petals.

SUMAC BRAISED NETTLES TOPPED WITH ONION SEEDS

SERVES 4

nettle leaves 300g, freshly picked

hot water 500ml

olive oil 3 tbsp

spring onions 6 finely sliced

garlic clove crushed

white long-grain rice 150g

sumac ½ tsp, crushed or ground

onion seeds 1 tsp, toasted

feta 100g

DIRECTIONS

Wearing gloves, place nettle leaves in a saucepan and pour

over 500ml of hot water. Boil for 1–2 minutes, until wilted, then drain but keep a cupful of the leftover water.

In a large saucepan gently heat the olive oil. Sauté the spring onions and garlic for 2–3 minutes. Add the rice, stirring to ensure the grains are well coated with the oil. Finally, add the wilted nettles and the reserved cupful of water. Cover and simmer for 10–12 minutes, until the rice is soft and all the liquid has been absorbed. Season, sprinkle with the sumac, stir well and serve topped with the toasted onion seeds and a wedge of feta on the side.

SPICE SCENTED SPRING LAMB WITH QUINCE AND MUSTARD RELISH

SERVES 4

For the lamb:

ground cinnamon ¼ tsp

ground black pepper ¼ tsp

ground cumin ½ tsp

ground cardamom ½ tsp

ground coriander ¼ tsp

salt ¼ tsp

lamb tenderloin 400g

For the relish:

large quinces 2 peeled, cored and sliced

port 100ml

ground cloves ½ tsp

ground nutmeg ¼ tsp

mustard powder 2 tsp

olive oil 5 tbsp

fresh broad beans 800g, unshelled

butter 15g

fresh mint leaves a handful

DIRECTIONS

Four hours in advance: make a spice rub by combining the cinnamon, black pepper, cumin, cardamom, coriander and salt in a bowl. Season the lamb with the spice rub and place in the fridge for around 4 hours.

To make the relish, place the quinces in a saucepan with the port, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 35–40 minutes, until the consistency is like jam. Add the cloves, nutmeg and mustard and mix well. Place in a jar ready for when you need to use it.

To cook the lamb, sauté it in the olive oil over a medium heat for 8 minutes each side, or longer if you like it well done. Reserve any cooking juices. Keep the lamb in a warm place, until ready to serve.

Bring a small saucepan of water to the boil and cook the broad beans for just 3–4 minutes. Drain and cool. Once cooled, remove the skins if you wish.

In another small pan melt the butter and sauté the mint leaves (keep a few aside for garnishing) until just wilted, then add the drained beans and cook for a further 3 minutes. Finally, add the meat juices.

To serve, spoon some broad beans into the centre of each plate. Slice the lamb into 16 pieces, season and arrange on top of the beans. Decorate with mint leaves and serve with the quince relish.

LAVENDER AND HONEY GLAZED CHICKEN WITH PINE NUT, CHERVIL AND HONEY SAUCE

SERVES 4

For the chicken:

Madeira 3 tbsp

dry lavender flowers 1 tsp





Sumac braised
nettles topped with
onion seeds.

Alpine delights

Enjoy the wild beauty and gastronomic delights of South Tyrol, and discover Val Gardena, Italy's spectacular and unspoilt valley in the Dolomites



Meet an Italian hiking in the stunning Dolomite mountains and you are likely to be greeted with a friendly Germanic *grüss gott* instead of *ciao*.

Welcome to the South Tyrol, an autonomous region bordering on Austria, that is one of Italy's most surprising and unspoilt secrets, with spectacular Alpine scenery, fairytale castles and onion-domed churches. Food lovers will be astonished to discover a unique cuisine, served either in isolated mountain refuges and farmhouses, cosy wooden *weinstube* wine bars or elegant gourmet dining rooms, because hidden away in these picturesque valleys and villages are an amazing 16 Michelin-starred restaurants.

The gastronomic traditions here are quite different from the rest of Italy, ranging from simple but irresistible apple strudels and hearty *canederli* dumplings, to gourmet, inventive recipes using wonderful local products such

as *speck*, the speciality rustic smoke-cured ham, wild *porcini* and *finferli* chanterelle mushrooms, asparagus, chestnuts, venison and river trout. The wines from here are just as much a revelation as the food, with vineyard terraces along steep valley slopes producing luscious whites from little-known grapes – traminer, muller thurgau, riesling – and reds that range from a fruity pinot noir to the local favourite, lagrein.

The jewel in South Tyrol's crown is the magnificent Val Gardena, known also by its Germanic name, Gröden, the perfect place to plan a trip to get a taste for the region. Beginning at the Ponte Gardena, this majestic glacial valley is surrounded on both sides by the towering peaks and crags of the Dolomite mountains, a landscape of such wild beauty that it has just been



Val Gardena: the jewel in South Tyrol's crown; Mairhofer prepares *schlutzkrapfen* (left)

added to the exclusive list of Unesco world heritage sites, alongside the likes of Egypt's Pyramids, the Taj Mahal and Stonehenge. The slopes of the Dolomites make Val Gardena one of Europe's prime ski resorts during the winter months, but it can be just as tempting to visit the rest of the year when you don't have to feel

guilty about indulging in lazy lunches and delicious dinners because there are a host of healthy outdoor sports – hiking, mountain biking – and relaxing spas, to burn off any extra calories.

First stop along the valley is the scenic town of Ortisei/St Ulrich,

famed for its artisan wood carvers and the gourmet cuisine of local chef Armin Mairhofer in the utterly romantic, Michelin-starred, Anna Stuben restaurant. Decorated in traditional Tyrolean style, with snug pine wood panelling, a majestic majolica stove and bouquets of fragrant mountain flowers, Anna Stuben's menu proposes light, unexpected dishes including six variations of creamy pumpkin soup, a salad of fresh pears with white truffle and beechnut oil, and locally bred lamb with tuna, sealed in a coffee crust served with sweet peppers, peppermint and capers. The chef works closely with local suppliers, and Ortisei's Friday food market is a vivid occasion to see these farmers coming down from the mountains dressed in traditional blue aprons and plumed hats. It's the ideal occasion to pick up organic honey, the most fruity apple juice you have ever tasted, tangy alpine Graukäse cheese, herb-infused grappa, and dozens of different salami, sausages and lean, aromatic speck.

The other village not to be missed is Selva/



HOLIDAY OFFER **Pleasure-and-active weeks in** **Val Gardena/Gröden**

28 August-10 September 2010

The Val Gardena active programme is the perfect way to spend a week in the beautiful Dolomites. A comprehensive feelgood factor is high on the agenda in Val Gardena/Gröden, and the Alps form the perfect backdrop for restoring the harmony of body and soul. Visitors will get to know the craftwork of Val Gardena and the unique combination of languages in the valley, as well as gaining first-hand experience of Val Gardena cuisine and tasting the specialities they have cooked themselves.

- 7 nights' accommodation
- Admission to the UNIKA sculpture fair (3-5 September 2010)
- 1 Ladin culture walk
- Val Gardena/Gröden speciality cookery course, including tasting
- Participation in the Val Gardena Active programme

Prices from £316 per person. For details and booking: www.valgardena.it/en/pleasure-active-weeks

Wolkenstein, and its tiny surrounding hamlets which host the midsummer "under the stars" banquet, where top chefs prepare an alfresco feast of traditional Tyrolean dishes for 600 people. And high up in the Dolomites, at the top of a cablecar station, you can also book for the Val Gardena Sky Dinner, a gourmet five-course candlelit meal that is served as the dramatic mountains are silhouetted against the red setting sun.

● Anyone wishing to experience these culinary attractions should visit during Autumn Gourmet Weeks, 5-26 September, in St Christina.

● Getting there: Easyjet, Ryanair and BA fly to Verona, Milan-Bergamo, Milan, Venice, Treviso and Innsbruck (closest airports are Innsbruck and Verona). There are low-cost coach transfers from airports to South Tyrol, see www.flytovalgardena.com.



For information on Val Gardena, South Tyrol visit www.valgardena.it or www.suedtirol.info

runny honey 5 tbsp
chicken breasts 4, on the bone

For the sauce:

pine nuts 100g, lightly toasted
olive oil 2 tbsp
fresh chervil ½ large bunch, finely chopped
runny honey 2 tbsp

DIRECTIONS

An hour in advance, pour the Madeira into a saucepan, add the lavender flowers and honey, bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer for 2 minutes. Allow to rest for an hour so that the flavours infuse, then season.

To cook the chicken, preheat the oven to 210C/gas mark 6½. Arrange the chicken breasts on a roasting tray and glaze with the prepared honey and lavender mixture. Cook in the oven for 45–50 minutes, until golden brown. Reserve some of the cooking juices.

To make the sauce, in a large bowl combine the pine nuts, olive oil, chervil, honey and 3 tablespoons of the cooking juices from the chicken, then season.

Serve the chicken with the pine nut, chervil and honey sauce.

RED MULLET WITH PINE NUTS, CURRANTS AND GREMOLATA

Gremolata is a garnish or condiment made from parsley, lemon and garlic. It is added to fish or meat dishes to give a more intense flavour. This dish can be prepared using almost any fish, but it turns out particularly well using rich, meaty fish such as mullet.

SERVES 4

For the gremolata breadcrumbs:

fresh parsley ½ large bunch, finely chopped
zest of small lemon
garlic cloves 2 crushed
ground black pepper ½ tsp
fresh breadcrumbs 60g

For the mullet:

red mullet 4 whole fish
pine nuts 2 tbsp, toasted and finely chopped
currants 3 tbsp
lemon juice of ½
zest of small lemon
plain flour for dusting



Orange and hazelnut cake with orange flower syrup, see page 42.

eggs 2 beaten
olive oil 4–5 tbsp

DIRECTIONS

To make the gremolata breadcrumbs, combine all the ingredients and keep to one side until needed.

To prepare the mullet, have the fishmonger descale, butterfly and bone it.

Combine the pine nuts, currants, lemon juice and zest, and add 3 tablespoons of the gremolata breadcrumbs. Place a spoonful of the stuffing inside each fish. Put the flour, eggs and remaining gremolata breadcrumbs into 3 separate dishes.

Coat each fish with flour,

then dip them in the egg, and finally coat with the gremolata breadcrumbs.

Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and cook the mullet for 4 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Turn only once, and take care not to let the stuffing fall out. Serve with a fresh salad.

AUBERGINE STACKS WITH POMEGRANATE, MINT AND YOGHURT SAUCE

SERVES 4

For the sauce:

suzme (strained yoghurt, see below) 200ml
fresh mint leaves 50g pack, finely chopped
garlic clove crushed
pomegranate seeds and juice

pomegranate molasses (see below) 1 tbsp

For the stacks:

sweet potato 600g roughly chopped
salt ½ tsp
aubergines 2 small
plain flour for dusting
olive oil 20ml
butter 10g
fresh mint leaves 50g pack, finely chopped
feta 150g, roughly chopped

DIRECTIONS

To make the sauce, combine all the ingredients together and refrigerate until needed. Preheat the oven to 220C/gas mark 7. To make the stacks, place the sweet potato chunks in a saucepan, >>

Summer mezze

cover with water and bring to the boil. Add the salt and simmer gently for 15 minutes, until the potatoes are tender. Drain and set to one side.

Cut the aubergines into slices, each roughly ½cm thick. Season lightly and dust with flour. Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan and fry the aubergine slices for 3–4 minutes on a medium heat, until golden on both sides. Place on kitchen paper to drain.

Melt the butter in a saucepan and add the cooked sweet potato, mint and feta. Cook for 1–2 minutes to combine then remove from the heat.

Line a baking tray with greaseproof baking paper and on it alternately layer the aubergine slices and potato mix in 4 neat piles, starting with the largest slices at the bottom and finishing with the smallest slices on top. Place in the oven and bake for 5 minutes. Serve hot, with the cold pomegranate sauce.

SUZME

Place good-quality, full-fat, plain yoghurt in the centre of double-layered muslin or cheesecloth. Standing over a sink, twist the muslin around the yoghurt until you have a tight ball. Tie the top with some string and suspend the ball (I tie it to the tap) for a day or so. You will end up with yoghurt of a very thick consistency, which will be roughly half the weight you started with.

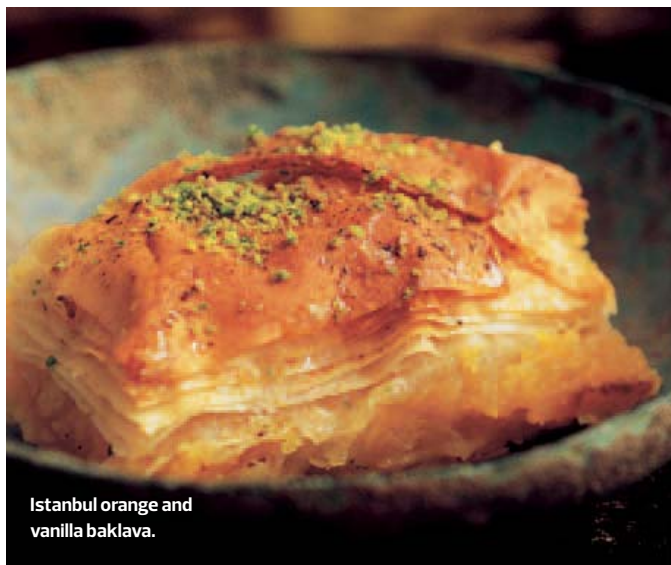
POMEGRANATE MOLASSES

pomegranate juice 1litre
sugar 115g
lemon juice 4 tbsps

DIRECTIONS

In a large, uncovered saucepan, on a medium heat, stir all the ingredients together until the sugar has completely dissolved. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for roughly an hour, or until the juice has a syrupy consistency and has reduced to roughly 1 cupful. Pour out into a jar.

Allow to cool completely, then store in the refrigerator for up to four weeks.



Istanbul orange and vanilla baklava.

ORANGE AND HAZELNUT CAKE WITH ORANGE FLOWER SYRUP

This is a speciality of the Jewish quarter on the Asian side of Istanbul.

SERVES 8–10

For the syrup:

water 150ml
caster sugar 250g
orange juice 2 tbsps
zest of small orange
orange flower water 2 tbsps

For the cake:

eggs 5, separated
caster sugar 200g
ground hazelnuts 250g

To serve:

thick yoghurt 300ml
icing sugar 2 tbsps
passion fruit 4, seeds and pulp only
cake tin 20cm x 10cm

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 200C/gas mark 6. To make the syrup, in a saucepan bring the water to the boil. Add the sugar and orange juice and simmer for 10–12 minutes, until the sugar has dissolved and you have a thick syrupy consistency. Remove from the heat and cool, then stir in the orange zest and orange flower water.

To make the cake, in a bowl beat the egg yolks with the sugar until you have a pale and creamy mixture. Add the hazelnuts and

combine well. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until stiff and glossy, then gently fold them into the hazelnut mixture.

Line and grease the cake tin and pour in the cake mixture. Bake in the oven for 25–30 minutes, until lightly golden. Remove the cake from the oven and evenly pour the cooled orange syrup over the top.

To serve, combine the yoghurt, icing sugar and passion fruit in a bowl. Serve with the warm cake.

ISTANBUL ORANGE AND VANILLA BAKLAVA

This, in my opinion, is the undisputed queen of baklava. I hope you love it as much as I do!

SERVES 10–12

For the syrup:

caster sugar 350g
orange juice 1tbsp
water 350ml
orange flower water 2 tbsps

For the baklava:

oranges 2 large
seeds of a vanilla pod
orange marmalade 1tbsp
filo pastry 400g packet
butter 150g, melted
pistachios 100g, roughly chopped
mascarpone 50ml
baking tray 25cm x 12cm

DIRECTIONS

To make the syrup, place the sugar, orange juice and water in a saucepan and gently bring to the

boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10–12 minutes, until the syrup becomes thick and glossy. Add the orange flower water and cool.

To make the baklava, bring a large saucepan of water to the boil and add the whole oranges. Simmer for 45–50 minutes, until the fruit is soft, making sure the oranges are covered by water at all times. Remove the oranges with a slotted spoon and leave to cool. Slice the oranges open and pick out the pips, then transfer all of the cooked orange (including the skin) to a food processor and process to a smooth purée. Place the orange pulp in a muslin bag or cloth and squeeze out as much of the liquid as possible. Discard the liquid and put the orange pulp into a bowl. Add the vanilla seeds and marmalade and mix well.

Preheat the oven to 200C/gas mark 6. Cut the filo pastry sheets to fit whatever size baklava dish you're using. I use a baking tray approximately 25cm x 12cm. Keep the pastry covered with a damp cloth while you're not using it. Brush the baking tin with a little butter and start layering the filo sheets, one by one, brushing butter on to each layer. I usually use 8–10 sheets to start with. Do not press the sheets down as you layer them – they should be loosely laid into the tray.

Once you have layered the first half of the filo sheets, evenly spoon over the orange and vanilla purée. Then continue to layer with the rest of the filo sheets as before, another 8–10 sheets on top, each time brushed with butter.

Cut the uncooked baklava into small squares or diamond shapes and place in the oven for 30 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 170C/gas mark 3½ and cook for a further 15–20 minutes, until golden and puffed up. Remove from the oven and, while hot, slowly pour over the cooled syrup, making sure it seeps into every little gap. Sprinkle the pistachios over the top.

Cool completely and serve with a dollop of mascarpone. **OFM**

Purple Citrus & Sweet Perfume by Silvena Rowe is published by Hutchinson, £25. To order a copy for £19.99, with free UK p&tp, go to guardian.co.uk/bookshop or call 0330 333 6847

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How to cook The perfect tapas

Basque-style tuna belly, octopus in paprika, vegetable tortilla... Take a Spanish lesson from Simone and Inés Ortega and make a delicious spread of simple appetisers

She may be Spain's foremost authority on Spanish food, but when it comes to tapas even Inés Ortega concedes it is difficult to define precisely. "In principle tapas is a slice of bread topped with any ingredients, served hot or cold, and eaten with fingers or a fork. It's something to be done before a meal, but then tapas can often replace a meal. The point of tapas is that you're not locked into a formal meal. There's very little commitment in sampling tapa." The only thing universally agreed on is how it's eaten: "invariably with a drink."

Ortega's latest book, *The Book of Tapas*, which she co-authored with her late mother, Simone, is a sequel of sorts to her 2007 tome, *1080 Recipes*, and features

miniature variations of Spain's national cuisine. By whittling down their knowledge to about 250 recipes, the focus is on Madrilenian-style tapas (the Ortegas have always lived in Madrid) which is the most diverse to be found in Spain. "In Madrid the customs, habits and cuisine of the people comes from all over. Even the most remote corners of Spanish culture have become ingrained. It's a synthesis of every type of Spanish food."

If the cultural identity of a country is wrapped up in its food, it's fair to say tapas is more than just a pre-dinner snack. "I believe our climate, the sun, our wine and our character help to elevate the ritual of tapas into a pure delight. Tapas is completely integral to the Spanish culture." **Morwenna Ferrier**

1 | SALTED ANCHOVIES

SERVES 6

fresh anchovies 12
coarse sea salt 1kg
bay leaves 6
thyme 3 sprigs

DIRECTIONS

Put the whole, uncleaned anchovies in a large dish and cover them with 2 handfuls of the salt, then set aside for 20 minutes.

Once salted, clean them, remove the heads, rinse and dry them. Put the anchovies in a glass jar, layering them with the salt, bay leaves and thyme until the jar is full. The top layer should be salt. Seal the jar hermetically and marinate for at least one month before consuming. Remove the

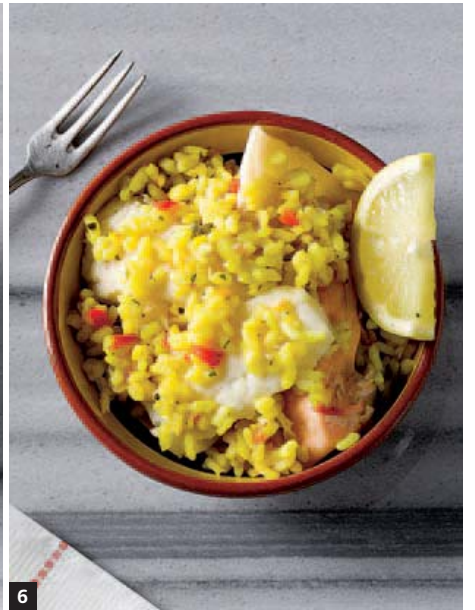
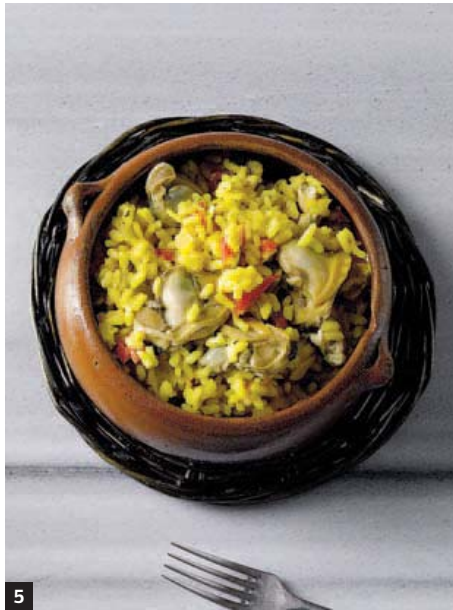
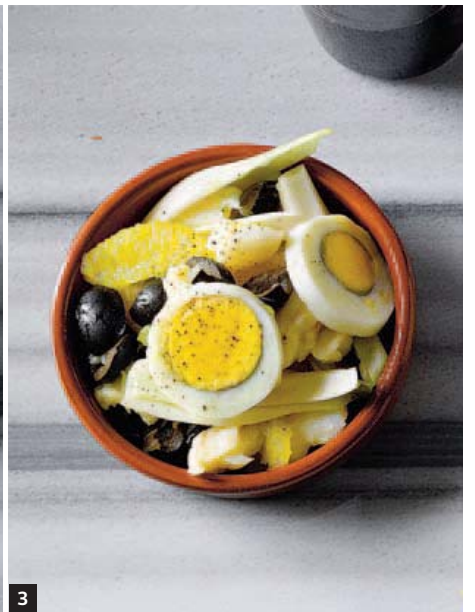
anchovies as needed and rinse off the salt before eating them. Good with toast, spread with butter or oil, and topped with tomato slices and a little basil.

2 | BASQUE-STYLE TUNA BELLY FILLETS

SERVES 8

olive oil 4 tbsp
onions 300g, sliced
green bell peppers 150g, long and thin, seeded and chopped
garlic 2 cloves, chopped
serrano ham 2 slices cut into thin strips
tuna belly fillets 500g
fresh red chilli seeded and thinly sliced
balsamic vinegar to serve
chives finely snipped, to serve
salt and pepper

>>



Summer tapas

DIRECTIONS

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a pan. Add the onions and pan-fry over a low heat, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes, until beginning to brown. Add the green peppers and pan-fry, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add the garlic and a little salt and cook for 5 minutes. Add the ham strips at the end so they do not cook.

Heat the remaining oil in a skillet or frying pan. Season the tuna pieces lightly with salt and pepper, add to the pan and fry over a high heat, turning several times, until they are pink in the centre, or done to your liking.

To serve, put the chilli in the centre of a warm serving dish, then drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with the chives. Spoon the onion mixture over the top with the tuna fillets. It is important to cook the tuna at the last minute.

3 | SALT COD, ORANGE, ONION AND OLIVE SALAD

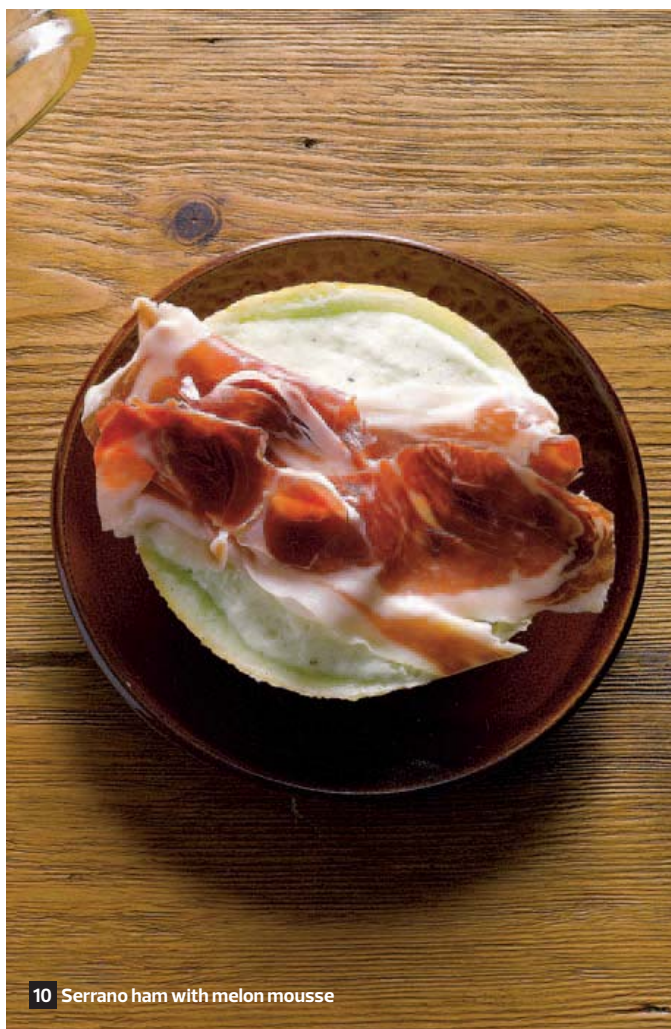
SERVES 4

salt cod not too dry, 400g
cold milk 250ml
oranges 4 large and juicy, peeled and chopped
black olives 100g, pitted and halved
spring onions 4, chopped
olive oil 4 tbsp
white-wine vinegar 1tbsp with 1tsp
sweet paprika dissolved in it
water 175ml
salt
hard-boiled eggs 3, sliced or cut into wedges, to garnish

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 180C/gas mark 4. To reduce the saltiness of the cod, put it in a roasting pan and roast for about 20 minutes until it is golden brown. Pour the milk over the fish and set aside for at least one hour. Drain off the liquid, then flake the fish, removing any skin and bones.

At least one hour before serving, put the oranges in a serving bowl, followed by the olives, spring onions and flaked fish. Pour the oil, vinegar and water over the top. Season with salt (but remember the fish is salty), then use your hands to



10 Serrano ham with melon mousse

'Our climate, the sun, our wine and our character help to elevate the ritual of tapas into a moment of pure delight. It's integral to our culture'

gently mix everything together.

Cover the bowl and chill for at least one hour. Serve in the same bowl, garnished with either slices or wedges of hard-boiled egg.

4 | MUSSELS WITH GARLIC AND PARSLEY BUTTER

SERVES 6

large mussels 2kg
white wine 175ml
water 175 ml
shallot chopped
mixed dried herbs 1pinch
salt

For the garlic and parsley butter:

butter 250g, softened
garlic 2 cloves, very finely chopped
chopped parsley 3tbsp

until the shells have opened.

Remove the pan from the heat and lift out the mussels with a slotted spoon. Discard any that remain closed. Divide the mussels on the half shells, open side uppermost, among 6 individual ovenproof plates.

To make the garlic and parsley butter, beat the butter with the garlic and parsley until thoroughly combined. Using a round-bladed knife, place a little of the flavoured butter on each mussel, covering it well. Put the dishes into the oven for just 3 minutes, until the garlic and parsley butter has melted. Serve immediately.

5 | SAFFRON RICE WITH CLAMS

SERVES 6

small clams 4 dozen
sunflower oil 2tbsp
onions 2, finely chopped
red bell pepper halved, seeded and chopped
garlic 2 cloves, finely chopped
tomatoes 2, peeled, seeded and chopped
chopped parsley 1tbsp
long-grain rice 500g
paprika 1tsp
vegetable or chicken stock 600ml
saffron threads 1pinch
salt

DIRECTIONS

Scrub the clams under cold running water and discard any with broken shells or any that do not snap shut when tapped. Put the clams and 4 tablespoons water in a large pan over a high heat.

Cover and steam for 5 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally, or until all the clams are open. Drain the clams in a colander set in the sink and leave until cool enough to handle. Discard any clams that do not open, then discard the open half shells. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a heavy-base flameproof pan over a medium heat. Add the onions, bell pepper and garlic and pan-fry, stirring occasionally, for about 6 minutes until the onions are softened but not coloured. Stir in the tomatoes and parsley and continue pan-frying and stirring.

Stir the rice into the tomato mixture, then add the paprika ➤



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and season with salt. Stir everything together to make sure the rice grains are coated, then add the stock and bring to the boil. Stir, cover the pan, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 12–15 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.

Meanwhile, toast the saffron threads in a dry pan over a medium heat, stirring, until you can smell the aroma. Tip them into mortar and pound to a powder. Stir the saffron powder and clams into the rice. Re-cover the pan and let stand a few minutes before serving.

6 | FISHERMAN'S RICE

SERVES 6

sunflower oil 175ml

garlic 6 cloves, 4 left whole and 2 finely chopped

dry chillies 2, halved lengthwise and seeded

onion chopped

tomatoes 4, chopped

saffron strands 1 pinch

varied fish (monkfish, red bream and squid) 1kg cleaned, prepared and cut into bitesize pieces

water 2.5l

short-grain rice 500g

salt

DIRECTIONS

Heat half the sunflower oil in a shallow heavy-base flameproof pan over a medium heat. Add the 4 whole garlic cloves and the chillies and pan-fry, stirring, until they are browned. Take care with the oil, as chillies burn very easily. Use a slotted spoon to remove them from the pan and set aside.

Stir the onion into the hot oil and pan-fry. Add three-quarters of the tomatoes and leave both ingredients to pan-fry. Crush the remaining garlic in a mortar with the saffron and salt, which prevents the garlic slipping, then add a little water. Pour this into the tomato mixture.

Add the fish to the pot with 2.5l cold water and season with salt. Slowly bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low and let simmer over a low heat for a couple of minutes, just until all the fish is cooked through. Remove the pot from the heat and gently strain. Keep the fish warm and



12 Vegetable tortilla

'In Madrid the customs, habits and cuisine of the people come from all over. It's a synthesis of every type of Spanish food'

reserve the cooking liquid.

Heat the rest of the oil in a skillet or frying pan over a medium heat. Add the remaining tomatoes and pan-fry. Add the chopped garlic and the rice and stir around, pan-frying everything together for a couple of minutes. Stir in 1.2l of the reserved fish stock and taste to see if the dish needs seasoning, but the stock should be quite salty. Bring to the boil, then let simmer for about 25 minutes until the rice is tender and the liquid has been absorbed. Let stand for 3 or 4 minutes and serve the rice in one dish and the fish in another.

7 | OCTOPUS WITH PAPRIKA

SERVES 6

octopus 1kg

olive oil 175ml

hot paprika 1 pinch

salt (optional)

DIRECTIONS

To tenderise the octopus it is best to freeze it before cooking. To cook it, bring a large pan of salted water to the boil, add the frozen octopus and cook for about 35 minutes, or until tender. You will need to test it, as the length of time depends on the age and

size of the octopus. Drain well and rinse under cold running water. Remove and discard any remaining dark skin and cut the meat into small pieces with kitchen scissors.

Place the pieces in a bowl, pour the oil over them, season with salt, if desired, and sprinkle with hot paprika to taste. Mix well to ensure the octopus is thoroughly coated and serve immediately.

If this is not possible, transfer the octopus and oil to a heatproof bowl, cover with aluminium foil and keep warm in the oven until needed.

As a variation, you can also heat 175ml olive oil in a pan, add 25g roughly chopped onion and 1 garlic clove and cook over a low heat for 10 minutes. Remove the onion and garlic with a slotted >>

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spoon and discard. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in sweet paprika to taste. Add the flavoured oil to the octopus pieces, mix well and serve immediately.

8 | FRIED GREEN ASPARAGUS WITH GARLIC, VINEGAR AND PAPRIKA

SERVES 6
green asparagus 2kg, trimmed
olive oil 6 tbsp
bread 3 slices, crusts removed
garlic 2 cloves
paprika ½ tsp
hot water 450ml
white-wine vinegar 3 tbsp
chopped parsley 1 tsp
salt

DIRECTIONS

Cut the asparagus into 4cm lengths. Heat the oil in a skillet or frying pan. Add the bread and cook over a medium heat, turning occasionally, for a few minutes, until golden brown on both sides. Remove from the pan and set aside. Add the garlic to the pan and cook, stirring frequently, for a few minutes, until golden brown. Transfer the garlic to a mortar, add the fried bread and pound with a pestle.

Pour the oil from the skillet into a pan and heat it. Add the asparagus and cook for 2-3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the paprika, then pour in 450ml hot water. Return the pan to a medium heat, cover and cook, shaking the pan occasionally, for 15 minutes, or until the asparagus spears are just tender.

To finish, add the vinegar and a little of the asparagus cooking liquid to the mixture in the mortar and stir well, then stir into the pan containing the asparagus. Season with a little salt and cook for another 5 minutes. Sprinkle with the parsley and serve at once.

9 | FRIED ARTICHOKE

SERVES 6
lemon 1 halved
globe artichokes small, young, 1.5-2kg
lard 2 tbsp (optional)
olive oil 2-4 tbsp

serrano ham 150g, diced
chopped parsley 1 tbsp
salt

DIRECTIONS

Squeeze the juice from one lemon half and add it to a large bowl of water. Break off the artichoke stems and remove the coarse outer leaves. Cut off the tips of the remaining leaves. Cut the artichokes in half lengthwise and remove and discard the chokes. Rub the artichokes with the remaining lemon half and place them in the acidulated water. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the artichokes and bring back to the boil, then lower the heat, cover and simmer for about 25 minutes, until tender. (Test by gently pulling a leaf; it should come away easily.)

Drain the artichokes well, turning them upside down and pressing gently. Melt the lard, if using, with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a pan. If not

'The point of tapas is that you're not locked into a formal meal. There is very little commitment in sampling tapa'

using lard, add 2 tablespoons more oil and heat. Add the ham and artichokes and cook gently, stirring occasionally, for 8 minutes. Sprinkle with the parsley and serve immediately.

10 | SERRANO HAM WITH MELON MOUSSE

SERVES 6
gelatin 3 leaves
small melons, preferably cantaloupe 3, halved
double cream 250ml, whipped
serrano ham 12 thin slices
salt and pepper
water 1.5l

DIRECTIONS

Put the gelatin leaves in a bowl of cold water and let soak for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, remove the seeds from the melons and scoop out the flesh with a melon baller or teaspoon, taking care not to break the skins. Put the skins into the refrigerator, and put the flesh into a blender and blend. Put a small amount of the

melon purée in a small pan and warm it through over a low heat. Squeeze out the gelatin leaves, add to the pan and stir well to dissolve. Stir in the remaining melon purée and let it cool.

Whisk the double cream to stiff peaks and fold it into the melon mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Pour the mixture into the melon shells and put in the refrigerator for 4 hours. Serve each melon half on a separate plate with 2 slices of serrano ham. Serve chilled.

11 | LENTILS WITH BACON AND SAUSAGES

SERVES 6
small onion
cloves 2
Puy lentils 600g
bay leaf
carrot cut into 4 pieces
garlic 2 cloves, unpeeled
bacon 250g, in a single piece
small sausages 12
olive oil 275ml
salt

DIRECTIONS

Stud the onion with the cloves. Put the Puy lentils into a pan, add the onion, bay leaf, pieces of carrot, garlic cloves and bacon and pour in water to cover generously. Cover and bring to the boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 60-90 minutes, until the lentils are tender. Drain the lentils, reserving the cooking liquid. Remove the onion, bay leaf, garlic, carrot and bacon. Cut the bacon into small cubes and set aside.

Prick the sausages if they have artificial casings. Heat the olive oil in a skillet or frying pan. Add the sausages and cook, turning frequently, for about 5 minutes, until lightly browned and cooked through. Remove from the skillet and keep warm.

Drain off about half the oil from the skillet and reheat. Add the cubes of bacon and cook, stirring, for about 3 minutes, then add the lentils. Stir well and season to taste with salt. Put the

lentils into a warm serving dish, place the sausages on top and serve immediately.

Some people prefer a little more liquid in the finished dish. If so, reserve and add some cooking liquid from the lentils to achieve the desired consistency. It is worth reserving the stock in case there are any lentils left over. They can be puréed in a food processor to make a thick soup, which can be garnished with croûtons or a little white rice.

12 | VEGETABLE TORTILLA

SERVES 4
olive oil 4 tbsp
onion chopped
bell peppers 1 green, 1 red, halved, seeded and finely chopped
aubergine diced
courgette diced
ripe, red tomatoes 2, peeled, seeded and diced
eggs 8
salt

DIRECTIONS

Heat the olive oil in a 28cm (11in) skillet or frying pan over a low heat. Add the onion and pan-fry, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes, then stir in the peppers, aubergine and courgette. When everything is browned add the tomatoes, and let cook until the water has evaporated and the mixture has thickened.

Beat the eggs vigorously with a pinch of salt in a large bowl. Increase the heat under the vegetables. Tip in the egg mixture and cook, gently shaking the skillet occasionally, until the underside is set and lightly browned. Invert the tortilla on to a lid of a pan or a plate, then gently slide it back into the skillet, cooked side up. Cook, gently shaking the skillet occasionally, until the underside is set and golden brown. Serve immediately or at room temperature, cut into wedges.

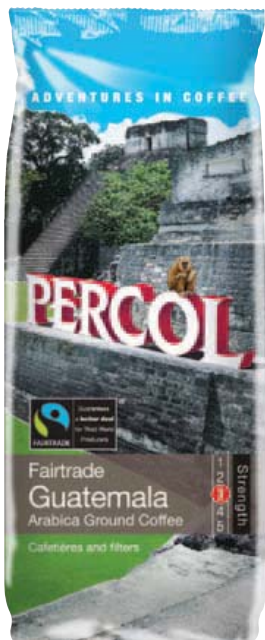
If you have any vegetable tortilla left over, it is tasty served cold with a little mayonnaise spread across the top. **OFM**

The Book of Tapas by *Simone and Inés Ortega* is published by *Phaidon*, £24.95. To order a copy for £19.99, with free UK p&p, go to guardian.co.uk/bookshop or call 0330 333 6847

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Waitrose

Ice cream

Made on the farm from fresh Jersey milk and rich double cream, Beechdean Farmhouse Dairy Ice Cream is free from artificial colourings, flavourings or additives. Available at Waitrose in 2ltr vanilla and various 1ltr tubs.



Premium cheese

Entremont brings you the best of French cheese with specialities produced in the mountainous areas of Savoie and Jura. With its complex, nutty flavour, Comté cheese from Entremont is delicious on its own, with biscuits and grapes or paired with a robust red wine. Find it in Waitrose, or in Ocado alongside other Entremont favourites such as Emmental, Beaufort, Morbier and Reblochon.

Great tasting refreshment

Each made with gently sparkling 100% pure fruit juice. Delicious Appletiser and Peartiser complement food beautifully and are a mouth-watering way to treat yourself. Just 150ml counts as one of your five-a-day.

Here's a Great Little Idea to liven up your lunch...

Bring out the Branston! For a spicy chicken wrap - squeeze Branston Sweet Chilli Mayo onto a tortilla wrap, bung in some grilled chicken, lettuce and red pepper and wrap it up! Delicious!



www.greatlittleideas.com



Stoneleigh pinot noir 2008:

A sumptuous, full flavour with ripe strawberry, wild berry and spicy plum characters. The palate is soft with earthy, gamey characteristics, enhanced by French oak maturation.



Classic chutneys

With eight exotic chutneys and pickles to choose from, the Geeta's jar range includes the ever popular Premium Mango and Lime & Chilli varieties. Fresh, aromatic and all natural, there's something to delight the tastebuds of everyone. Available at leading supermarkets.

Taste of India

Named after the legendary cavalry regiment that served on the North West Frontier during the 19th Century, Bengal Lancer is a full-bodied delight. Inspired by the distinctive flavours that would have been experienced by India Pale Ale drinkers of the time, this pale amber nectar is distinctively hoppy and assertively bitter.

Stoneleigh sauvignon blanc 2008:

This wine displays a fragrant bouquet of passion fruit and dry grass aromas with a palate of rich, ripe passion fruit and clean, crisp apple flavours with a lingering finish.

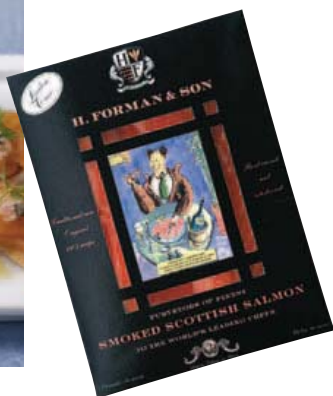


Award-winning ale

A full-bodied, mahogany-coloured ale with a powerful malt base and lashings of tangy marmalade, Fuller's ESB is a multiple award-winning liquid legend. The blend of pale ale and crystal malts conjure up biscuity, toffee notes and a smooth, mellow bitterness lingers on the palate to give a superbly satisfying finish.

Forman's finest

H. Forman & Son have been perfecting their 'London Cure' salmon since 1905. Mild and delicately smoky, it's sliced by hand, guaranteed Scottish and cured within a couple of days of it coming out of the water.



20 GREAT SUMMER WINES UNDER £10

The prices might be low but the quality is high. Here, in his debut column, **David Williams**, the Observer's brilliant new wine critic, reveals the smartest buys for the brightest days



Whites 2008 Waitrose Cuvée Pêcheur, IGP Comté Tolosan
£3.79; Waitrose; waitrosewine.com

Waitrose's very good house white aperitif packs in a lot of flavour for the money. An aromatic mix of ugni blanc and colombard from south-west France, it's a worthy cut-price sauvignon blanc alternative.



2009 Quinta de Azevedo Vinho Verde, Portugal
£5.49 if you buy two at Majestic; majestic.co.uk

Few wine styles are more invigorating than well-made vinho verde. Light in alcohol (just 10.5% in this case), with racy acidity and a tongue-tingling spritz, the appley Azevedo would be an ideal companion for lightly spicy Asian food.



2009 AA Badenhorst Secateurs Chenin Blanc, Swartland, South Africa
£8.99; Handford; handford.net; 020 7589 6113

Astonishingly rich, with layer upon layer of honey and cream, this terrific, carefully crafted white from one of South Africa's most impressive new producers is crying out for a roast chicken salad.



2007 Riesling QbA, Willi Schaefer, Mosel Valley
£9.99, Adnams Cellar & Kitchen; cellarandkitchen.adnams.co.uk; 01502 727 222

German riesling remains resolutely unfashionable, and the label for this wine certainly won't help that. But the wine itself – delicate and off-dry with searing acidity and peachy fruit – deserves much better.



Reds 2008 Spanish Garnacha/Shiraz
£3.59, Marks & Spencer

A plonk, yes, but a very superior one. From Cariñena in the north of Spain, this juicy, but spicy glugger is just about as good as it gets for under four quid. A perfect barbecue or summer party red.



2008 Costero Syrah, Viña Leyda, Chile
£6.99 when you buy two bottles, Majestic

Viña Leyda were pioneers of Chile's cool-climate Leyda valley and this syrah carries on the good work. Made in a northern Rhône style, it has pepper, raspberries and delightfully refreshing acidity.



2008 Secano Estate Pinot Noir, Chile
£6.99, Marks & Spencer

Chile is pretty much the only country in the world that makes decent pinot noir for under a tenner. This wine, though not exactly complex, does a thoroughly good job of conjuring up the silken texture and red fruits of much more expensive red burgundy.



2007 Saumur Rouge, Les Vignerons de Saumur, Loire, France
£8.25, Yapp Brothers; yapp.co.uk; 01747 860 423

There's something very moreish about well-made cabernet franc such as this: stick it in the fridge for a couple of hours to enjoy its succulent blackcurrant, faintly leafy qualities to the full.



2009 Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Gavi, Italy

£6.99; Sainsbury's; sainsburys.co.uk

Generally speaking, Sainsbury's does a fine job with its Taste the Difference line-up, and this pristine northern Italian number, with its refreshing, lemon-and-herb character, is no exception.



2009 Ponte Pietra Trebbiano/Garganega, Veneto, Italy

£6.60, Green & Blue Wines; greenandbluewines.com; 020 8693 9250

A minor modern Italian classic, made by a New Zealand winemaker in the north-east of the country. There's nothing especially complicated here, just a graceful white wine full of green apples and white flowers.



2009 Villa Maria Private Bin Pinot Grigio, East Coast, New Zealand

£8.49, Waitrose

Another New Zealand/Italian co-production, this time featuring an Italian grape variety made by one of New Zealand's best producers. Stylistically, it's miles apart from stereotypically neutral pinot grigio: exotically fruity but fresh.



2009 Tesco Finest Darling Sauvignon Blanc, South Africa

£6.99, Tesco; tesco.com/wine

The South Africans would have much more chance of winning a sauvignon blanc World Cup than they have in the football, as this bottle proves: better value than its equivalents from New Zealand and the Loire, it mixes the green and lean with tropical notes.



2007 Nord Sud Viognier, Laurent Miquel, Vin de Pays d'Oc, France

£8.99, Tesco

An affordable interpretation of a pricey Rhône grape variety, this gorgeous viognier has a musky nose of almost overripe apricots that calls to mind a warm late-summer evening in the garden.



Sherry Marks & Spencer Manzanilla

£5.99; marksandspencer.com

A wonderfully bracing, salty/savoury blast of Spain, this lithe but super-concentrated sherry from the seaside town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda is possibly the best-value wine in this list, and will go down happily with pretty much any food you wish to throw at it.



2007 Regnie, Maison des Bulliats, Beaujolais, France

£8.60, Nick Dobson Wines; nickdobsonwines.co.uk; 0118 9771545

Beaujolais is still tainted by all the "Nouveau est arrive" shenanigans. That's a shame when its more serious wines, such as this superbly supple, mid-weight red, are so perfect (after time in the fridge) for summer drinking.



2009 Pulenta La Flor Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina

£9.95, Berry Bros & Rudd; bbr.com; 0800 280 2440; £9.49, Noel Young Wines; nywines.com; 01223 566 744

If, by some miracle, it turns out to be a barbecue summer, it's worth having a few bottles of this powerful, juicy malbec from the spiritual home of alfresco meat-burning to hand.



Rosé 2008 Rioja Rosado CVNE, Spain

Down to £5.99 from £7.99 until 30 August, Majestic

The rather grand rioja producer CVNE makes a number of excellent red wines, but it is also responsible for one of my favourite rosés. This is everything you'd want from the style: masses of fresh strawberries, but in no way cloying.



2009 Boekenhoutskloof The Wolftrap Rosé, South Africa

£6.99, Oddbins; oddbins.com

Boekenhoutskloof's Marc Kent is one of South Africa's best red winemakers, and in this fun, robust pink blend of syrah, cinsault and grenache, he's fashioned an answer to one of life's more intractable dilemmas: what to drink when it's too hot for red wine.



Sparkling Prosecco Ca' Rosa NV, Italy

£8.99, Oddbins

Prosecco is often regarded, somewhat sneeringly, as a budget alternative to Champagne. But this example, with its fine, lemon-sherbet bubbles and refreshingly dry finish, has a frivolous style all its own.



2009 Moscato d'Asti DOCG, Elio Perrone, Italy

£6.50, The Wine Society; thewinesociety.com; 01438 741177

Champagne and strawberries? Pah! This sweet, light (just 5.5% alcohol), gently fizzy, Italian white is a far better match, and, with its pure muscat grape flavours, is lovely on its own, too.

PHOTOGRAPH Pål Hansen

PLAYING WITH FIRE

Burgers, lagers and barbecue rubs rated by **Huw Gott**, the co-owner of top London steakhouse Hawksmoor



Beefburgers

Marks & Spencer The Grill Beefburger

340g, £4.99
Although they're a little finely minced, the flavour is superb. Juicy and rich and they grill up to the right texture.



★★★★★

Harvey Nichols Monterey Jack cheese and Jalapeño burgers

£3.50 each, 0845 604 1888
The meat's a nice quality but the cheese filling tastes of anything but beefburger.



★★★★★

Morrisons, The Best Scottish Beef Chilli & Pepper

£3 for four
This has quite a strong taste. I don't know of what but it offends the meat. The quality isn't that great, either.



★★★★★

Waitrose with Chilli

227g, £2.19
Wow. Without the chilli they'd be passable but this just burns. Over minced too.



★★★★★

Rump steak

Donald Russell Pave Rump Box

£20 for four small, donaldrussell.com
The texture is excellent for rump. Slightly marbled with a rich, meaty texture that's tender on cooking



★★★★★

Tesco, Finest Rump Steak
10.38 per kilo (approx two large)
A bit grassy tasting but not bad at all. Chewy, inoffensive, adequate.

★★★★★

Marks & Spencer Rump Steak
£5.99 for 260g (approx two small)
Slightly chewy and a nice colour. The cut's nice too. I just think it tastes a little metallic.

★★★★★

Sainsbury's, Taste the Difference Rump Steak
£13.73 per kilo (approx one large)
Bland and, if this is possible, a bit metallic as well. Not a great steak.



★★★★★

Bagged salad



Waitrose
Spinach, rocket and red watercress
110g, £1.99, ocado.com
A classic combination of fancy watercress and rocket and not just that, they've used red watercress. Delicious and crisp. Perfection.

★★★★★

Asda
Mixed Salad
110g, £1.09
The leaves aren't too bad if a little damp and soggy but it's a nice mix.

★★★★★



Florette
Crispy
200g, £1.74, widely available
I think they started off well but after sitting in the bag they look a little dirty and tired and they taste a little tired.

★★★★★

Tesco
French Style
143g, £1.60
A good selection bag but they've been washed in something which has left a residue.

★★★★★

Veggie sausages

Asda
Glamorgan-style sausages
300g, £1.62
I'm not sure how these will fare on a barbecue. They don't taste of meat – a good thing – rather of some delicious filthy bubble n squeak. Very good.

★★★★★



Quorn
Sizzling Banger
250g, £1.99, Waitrose
These purport to be meat-ish and fail at the first hurdle. Weirdly pink and sweet.

★★★★★

Cauldron
Cumberland-style Sausages
200g, £1.60, ocado.com
I can taste lavender and oregano in here. Sounds nice but isn't. Flecked with black, these sausages look a little repellent.

★★★★★

Morrisons
Meat-free Sausages
270g, £1.59
Dry, sugary, absolutely nothing. Almost inedible. Like a very bad frankfurter.

★★★★★



Pork sausages



Graig Farm
Radnor Pork and Herb, gluten-free
225g, £2.65, grraigfarm.co.uk
These have the most natural texture and the meat's not too finely milled. A very juicy taste. Very good.

★★★★★

Tesco, Finest
Traditional
454g, £2
Not well seasoned but a high quality of sausage that tastes fresh.

★★★★★



The Black Farmer
Premium Pork
400g, £2.39, ocado.com
Slightly false tasting and I can't tell how this has been made but it would be excellent in a greasy spoon. Just not one for the barbecue.

★★★★★

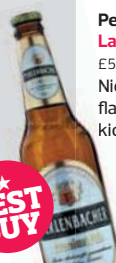
Waitrose
Free-range Jumbo
400g, £2.39
Bland, watery and sticky. They almost bleed liquid when you insert a fork. Hmm.

★★★★★



Summer beers

BEST BUY



Perlenbacher
Lager
£5.99 for 6, Lidl
Nice, light, balanced and flavoursome. A good hoppy kick and very refreshing.

★★★★★



Nils Oscar God
Lager
330ml, £1.55, ocado.com
Rounded, buttery and sweet. A little bland but it's probably just low alcohol.

★★★★★



Windhoek
Lager
330ml, £1.56, onlyfinebeer.co.uk
A little bitter and a touch too malty. It needs balancing out but it's pretty good.

★★★★★



Birra Moretti
Lager
660ml, £1.94, Tesco
Gentle, soft but far too light for me. Good for summer but still, a little watery.

★★★★★

Barbecue Rubs



Harrods
Rub with Love, Cowboy Steak
99g, £5.25
Very, very sweet but almost dust like in consistency which is excellent for a rub. The sugar will caramelise too which is nice.

★★★★★

Marks & Spencer
BBQ Rub
170g, £1.99
Very Middle-Eastern tasting. A lot of cumin and peppers but relatively inoffensive and good for most red meats.

★★★★★



Morrisons
Mediterranean
35g, £1.07
Smells nice, looks like pot pourri and wouldn't stick to meat for love nor money. Nice taste, though.

★★★★★

Asda, Extra Special
Bonfire Rub
75g, £2
Spicy, Moroccan and not bad for what it is.

★★★★★



Barbecue sauces



Tomato Chilli Jam Co
Tomato Chilli Jam
340g, £5.95, [Harvey Nichols](http://HarveyNichols)
I like the idea of this. It's rather too sweet and spicy but not a bad way to kick start some meat.

★★★★★



Asda
Extra Special Sticky
270g, £1.38
Although I can't identify any natural flavours in here, the flavour's very nice and very barbecue-y indeed.

★★★★★

Daylesford Organic
Tomato Ketchup
200ml, £3.95, [Harvey Nichols](http://HarveyNichols)
I don't know why you'd not choose Heinz ketchup. It's OK, very natural tasting, but essentially just tomato puree.

★★★★★



Jack Daniels
Barbecue Sauce
275g, £2.48, ocado.com
Really rather unpleasant. A slightly sweet, boozy taste with a vinegar kick that just doesn't work.

★★★★★

taste the sunshine

Break out the barbecue and start to celebrate summer with these great sunshine foods and drinks.

PURE GLACIER, with small bubbles

Savour the gently sparkling taste of pure ice clear Isklar. Isklar is a Norwegian glacial natural mineral water from a pristine wilderness where dramatic mountains and cascading waterfalls plunge into deep fjords while dazzling glaciers refract intense light.

Proudly a CarbonNeutral® product, enjoy Isklar sparkling with food or for healthy refreshment 'on the go'. Now available in 460ml and 975ml at Tesco.



PERFECT PUDDINGS

Dive into Pudding Place desserts, exclusive to Tesco. Designed to tempt your taste buds, the deliciously different range includes individual confections such as ambrosial Butterscotch Sundae, sumptuous Strawberry Trifle and heavenly Summer Fruit Cheesecake. And from 15th June, you'll be really spoilt for choice – the new season's range features all manner of irresistible treats. Choose from Millionaire's Sundae, Rocky Road Dessert, Swirled Passion Fruit & Mango Cheesecake and Chocolate Tiramisu.



CLASSY CINZANO

Bold and rich in character, each member of the Cinzano vermouth range has its own unique style. Best enjoyed neat over ice or mixed with lemonade, soda water or grapefruit juice, Cinzano Bianco is a full-bodied yet delicate delight. Intense, daring Rosso and vibrant, carefree Extra Dry are all equally exciting and versatile.



HEAT AND FLAVOUR

Pep up your barbecues with TABASCO Original Hot Pepper Sauce. Use it to baste steaks, ribs or chicken, or to add flavour to homemade burgers – a few shakes is all it takes to add fire to all your favourite outdoor treats.

Spiced Beef Skewers

Place 250g diced beef, two diced bell peppers and a diced red onion in a bowl. Pour on 100ml Dark Soy Sauce, 1/2 teaspoon chopped ginger, a clove of garlic, 2 tbsp TABASCO Pepper Sauce and 2 tbsp clear honey. Marinate for 1/2 hour, then thread onto skewers alternating between Chicken, Pepper and Onion. Place on BBQ and cook on medium heat as long as required. Serve with side salad.



BEAUTIES FROM THE BAY

Marlborough's unique cool maritime climate and ancient alluvial river soils are ideally suited to making elegant and vibrant Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wine styles, regarded as some of the world's best.



Oyster Bay Marlborough Chardonnay 2008

Refreshingly crisp and elegant with aromas of ripe citrus and stonefruit, balanced with subtle oak, and a creamy texture to finish.



Oyster Bay Marlborough Pinot Noir 2008

Fragrant, soft and flavourful with aromas of ripe cherries, plums and gentle sweet fruit tannins to provide serious structure and length.

TESCO

£1 OFF

Cinzano Bianco, Rosso, Extry Dry 1 ltr bottle

Offer valid from 16 May 2010 to 31 July 2010



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TO THE CUSTOMER: This coupon can only be used once in part payment against Cinzano Bianco 1ltr, Cinzano Rosso 1ltr, Cinzano Extry Dry 1ltr, when purchased in any Tesco store (where stocked) and presented with the product at the checkout. Only one coupon per product purchased, offer is subject to availability. Valid only in the UK & IOM. Not redeemable through Tesco.com. This coupon has no cash value. No change given. Copied, damaged or defaced coupons will not be accepted. Valid from 16/05/2010 until 31/07/2010. This coupon is and shall remain the property of Tesco Stores Limited and is not for re-sale or publication.



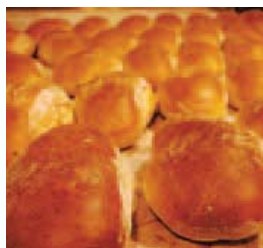
JIMMY'S SUPER SAUSAGES

"These Classic pork sausages have given me a chance to work with some fantastic British free range pig farmers and skilled artisan producers. Inspired by the very best of British and using the finest ingredients, these make the perfect sausage for the BBQ grill and will go down a treat. Get them while you can!"



To find out more visit
www.jimmysrange.com

Classic Pork Sausages,
£2.99 in Tesco stores
around the UK.



FLOUR POWER

Made using rye flour, Baltona White artisan bread is baked slowly to develop its unique and delicious taste, crispy crust and deliciously soft inside. Great for alfresco sandwiches, or gently roasted on a barbecue.

THE CIDER WITH THE BIG APPLE TASTE

Made with the juice of crunchy, sweet eating apples rather than bitter cider apples, Merrydown premium cider has been a firm favourite for more than 60 years. Choose from crisp Dry or fruity Medium varieties – both have a light sparkle and are exhilarating chilled. Available in all major supermarkets. To find out more information go to www.merrydown.co.uk



CREAMY DREAM

A mild, subtle and creamy new soft flavoured cheese, Saint Agur Délice effortlessly converts those who wouldn't usually try blue varieties. Easy to spread onto bread or crackers, it's perfect for sharing with family and friends. Just try keeping it to yourself!



LEAFY TREATS

For a clean, green accompaniment to any meal, look no further than Tesco 'Ready To Eat' bagged salads.



CORNISH CLASSICS

Best known for its traditional Fairings biscuits, iconic company Furniss of Cornwall has joined forces with celebrity chef Rick Stein to develop a bespoke range of Savoury Oat Biscuits. Made to Stein's usual high standards, the biscuits are delightfully crunchy and perfect with cheese or smoked mackerel, or dipped in humus. Choose from three delectable flavours; Cornish Sea Salt, Davidstow Cheddar and Thyme.



Tequila Sunrise

Mix 3 parts orange juice to 1 part Sierra Tequila, dash of lemon into a long glass with ice cubes then add a lacing of Grenadine to give the cocktail its unique mood of 'sunrise'.



SIERRA SUNRISE

Crack open a bottle of Sierra Tequila to celebrate the opening match of this summer's World Cup. Sierra's spirited Silver and smooth Reposado varieties both taste great neat, and add real verve to cocktails.

PREMIUM BREWS

With its perfectly balanced bitter and sweet flavours, Grolsch Premium Lager is rich in taste and best experienced with simple salted snacks such as olives or cheese. Meanwhile, the subtle combination of fruit and malt in crisp, characterful Coors Light effortlessly enhances light foods such as fish and chicken. Both beers are now available in Tesco.



£1 OFF

Grolsch 6x275ml, Grolsch 15x275ml, Coors Light 6x275ml

Offer valid from
16 May 2010 to
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What's in your basket?

Nancy Meyers

The Oscar-nominated screenwriter and director might be overdoing it on high-carb treats, says *Dr John Briffa*

'Food can control the mood of a film. It is erotic and primal'

Like most struggling writers trying to get their scripts commissioned, I had to do something odd to pay the rent. So, aged 21, I started up my own small cheesecake company in Philadelphia. This was the 70s. Cheesecake was big news. I worked late into the night, baking them in my tiny kitchen in my tiny flat, and sold them to hotels and shops. I just about made ends meet. I don't eat so much cheesecake now. I've switched to fruit pies. I've always been a so-so cook, but I bake very well. It's relaxing. I don't bake anything too exotic, just homemade cherry or apple pies.

Food is the simplest, most visual tool you have as a director. I started writing *It's Complicated* after a trip to France. It's obvious from the film that I spent most of my time sitting in cafés, eating warm croissants and drinking coffee. Food can control the mood of a film. When you see Meryl Streep's character baking at 5am, it makes you happy. But when you see her weeding the vegetable garden, you know she's



sad. I researched the script by reading a lot of food books and blogs. On the blogs, people talk surprisingly openly about the role food plays in their lives. Cooking is about giving, nurturing. It's what binds families, unites and reunites lovers. Meryl's character is a mother and an ex-wife who uses food to keep her family together. She feels the need to feed her ex-husband and in turn he needs to be fed. In this way, food can be both erotic and primal.

I like to eat meals I will remember. Otherwise, what's the point? Being a vegetarian (although I still eat chicken) can make that hard. I recently went to Buenos Aires and everyone told me to eat the steak. While I was looking around for anything but a steak house, I found some incredible Italian restaurants, so I ended up eating a lot of pasta while everyone else ate rump.

I start the day with scrambled egg whites, brown toast and a smear of olive oil. Lunch is usually eaten out so it'll be a salad, fresh fruit and lots of coffee. I get my protein from fish: tuna, hake, things like that, which I like grilled. I also eat a lot of bananas and I like good Argentinean wine if I'm drinking.

I don't diet, I don't do fads, I've just decided to not eat carbs. So no more bread and pasta for the month. I can't live without chocolate, though. I've always got a bar in my handbag. It has to be 72%. Any less and it's too sweet, any more and it's inedible. Like I said, I'm very particular. **OFM**

It's Complicated is out now (DVD/Blu-ray)

INTERVIEW Morwenna Ferrier
PHOTOGRAPH Rob White

Bananas

While a lot healthier than fruit pies and croissants, these are very carb-rich and not ideal for someone wanting to cut back on carbs for health benefits.

Croissants

Not a great food. I don't say this because of the butter, it's their high carb-count that I see as the real issue (see fruit pie). I'd advise Nancy to cut back on these sugary foods and starchy treats.

DIGITAL RETOUCHING BY GUILLERMO BECERRA/GETTY

72% chocolate

Cocoa is rich in polyphenols that appear to have broad health benefits, particularly for the cardiovascular system. The darker the chocolate, the more polyphenols it contains, so not a bad choice.

Fruit pie

Though undoubtedly tasty, pies of this nature contain too much refined sugar and flour. Such a carb load causes surges in the hormone insulin, which drives fatty accumulation in the body.

Olive oil

Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fat, which is believed to have benefits for the heart and circulatory system, and may offer some polyphenols (see chocolate), too. One of the best things in Nancy's basket.

Red wine

Red wine contains resveratrol which is linked with disease protection. Overall, though, the benefits of drinking it have probably been overstated. On the plus side, it's relatively low in carbs.

Grilled tuna or hake

While fish is healthy, Nancy tends to pick varieties that are not as rich in omega-3 fats. More emphasis on oily fish is likely to have benefits for her body and brain. Not a bad choice, though.



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| 2 A LUXURY BREAK AT THE LANGHAM, LONDON | 6 LUXURY CHOCOLATE HATBOXES | 10 A LUXURY CORNISH CHEESE HAMPER |
| 3 A SIX-COURSE MEAL AT FIFTEEN CORNWALL | 7 TEA FOR A YEAR AND TEAWARE FROM JING | 11 A CASE OF FRANCOIS MOUTARD CHAMPAGNE |
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A REFRESHING OUTLOOK

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First Direct has launched the Little Black Book: an online directory of inspiring personal recommendations from its existing customers.

First Direct is not just like any other bank, and its customers aren't just like any other people. One-third of all First Direct customers are recommended by existing happy customers who just wanted to pass on the good news – so who better to ask when you want a great recommendation for a weekend pint, an after-work glass of wine or a big night out? Log on and start discovering places like these:

● Oporto, Leeds

A brilliant little casual bar located on trendy Call Lane, a must-visit for anyone in the area who enjoys drinking and good music. Packed full of young, vibrant party lovers on any weekend night. The music is really good, mostly rock/indie and guest DJs.

● Tooting Tram and Social, London

The best pub in Tooting. It's hidden away in an old converted tram shed, hence the name. At the weekends, they open the upstairs balcony, which is a nice place to sit away from the crowds. They often have bands playing, as well as rockaoke (karaoke with a live band) and some excellent DJs.

● The Dog at Baughton, Earls Croome, Worcester

A great local pub with a fantastic food and drink selection. Locally sourced produce, all freshly cooked. The chef's pie is awesome! The garden is great for the kids, with a climbing frame and lots of space. Everybody is friendly and nothing seems too much trouble.

● Scratchers, Godalming, Surrey

If you like blues and rock played live and close-up in an intimate venue you'll love Scratchers at the Three Lions. Every weekend you get to see



Tooting Tram and Social, London

great line-ups from talented single performers to six-piece bands all playing your favourite blues and rock. And guess what: it's free!

● Babbity Bowsters, Glasgow

Hidden away on Blackfriars Street in Glasgow's Merchant City. Unlike the posier places and style bars which dominate this area, this pub adds rustic charm. There's quality homemade food, an excellent selection of beers, a beer garden and a landlord with an eye patch – it ticks all the usual boxes I look for in a drinking establishment.

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The Observer Food Monthly Awards 2010. Vote now.

This year is the seventh annual Observer Food Monthly Awards, celebrating the very best in British food and produce from grassroots producers right up to the most famous celebrity chefs. We want to know what your favourite foodie discoveries of the last year are. Share them with us, along with your favourite food and drink recipes, and you could win one of these great prizes: a food lover's trip to Flanders; an overnight stay at Langham Hotel London; a six-course dinner at Fifteen Cornwall; a Laithwaites food hamper; a Maison du Chocolat luxury box, a meal for 10 at Kitchen Italia; a hamper of Cornish Yarg from Lynher Dairies; a hamper of Luscombe's soft drinks; an ice-cream party for 10 at Freggo; or a Weber Genesis E-310 gas barbecue.

Vote online at observer.co.uk/foodawards or complete this form and return it to: Observer Food Monthly Awards, Freepost RSHE-RZGH-BSTU, Sample Answers Ltd, 74c Broad Street, Teddington TW11 8QT

Your details

First name Surname

Address Postcode

Telephone Email address

Please circle the region you live in: South England / North England / Midlands / Wales / Scotland / Northern Ireland / London

Your selections

Make your selections below. As well as the name of your nominations, please also include the town or city AND the region in which they are located. If your nomination is part of a chain, please clearly identify the branch you are voting for.

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1. Best restaurant (over £20 a head)

Town/city (including region):

2. Best cheap eats (under £15 a head)

Town/city (including region):

3. Best Sunday lunch

Town/city (including region):

4. Best ethical restaurant

Town/city (including region):

5. Best place to drink

Town/city (including region):

6. Best independent local retailer (shop or online)

Town/city (including region):

7. Best food blog (UK based)

Town/city (including region):

8. Food personality

Town/city (including region):

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9. Reader's recipe

Send us your own creations for food heaven. We will accept any unique recipe that you've devised, and our recipe testers will decide which recipes make it on to the plates of our judging panel.

10. Reader's cocktail recipe

This year we're introducing a new category, offering you the chance to send us your own creations for drink heaven. We will accept any unique cocktail recipe that you've devised and our recipe testers will decide which recipes make it into the glasses of our judging panel.

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See full terms and conditions at observer.co.uk/foodawards. One voting form/entry per person. Closing date for all entries is 25 June 2010. **Free prize draw:** 1. First prize is a two night break for two in Ghent including return Eurostar travel from London to Brussels and onward local train connections to any other Belgian station. The prize includes two nights' accommodation at a hotel in Ghent, museum guest passes, a taste/nibbling tour of the city, a boat trip on the river Lys and a meal for two at local restaurant The Belga Queen but excludes all other costs (incl insurance). 2. Second prize is an overnight stay for two at the luxurious London hotel The Langham. The prize includes overnight stay in a Grand Junior Suite, dinner for two at The Landau restaurant with a glass of champagne (excl wine and tip), afternoon tea for two in Palm Court but excludes all other costs (incl travel, transfers and insurance). 3. There are 10 further prizes: a six-course dinner for two at Fifteen Cornwall, Watergate Bay, worth £130; a Sweet and Sparkling hamper from Laithwaites (for five winners); a La Maison du Chocolat Bon Appetit Hatbox (for five winners); a meal for 10 at Kitchen Italia in London's Covent Garden worth £250, plus night's stay for two (for winner and guest) at the Mountbatten Hotel (Covent Garden); a year's supply of Jing tea; a case of champagne from Naked Wines; a hamper of Cornish Yarg cheese; a hamper of Luscombe soft drinks; an ice-cream party for 10 at Freggo, Piccadilly, London; and a Weber Genesis E-310 gas barbecue. 4. Winners will be notified by email or phone within 28 days of the closing date. 5. The first 20 entries drawn at random from all eligible entries will win the prizes in the order they are drawn. **Reader food and cocktail recipe competitions:** 6. The OFM judges will choose their favourite reader food recipe and cocktail recipe from all eligible entries. Winners will be notified by email or phone by 9 August 2010 and invited to attend the OFM Awards ceremony in October 2010 (date tbc). 7. Winning entries will be published in the OFM Awards issue in October 2010. **General:** 8. See full T&Cs for further details of all prizes, including restrictions. 9. Prize draw, recipe and cocktail competitions are open to UK residents aged 18 and over. 10. GNM employees and agents (including family members) and anyone connected to the prize draw and/or recipe competitions may not enter. 11. No cash alternative. Prizes are non-transferable and non-exchangeable. 12. GNM may change prizes at its discretion or offer alternatives of similar value. 13. Booking of prizes is subject to availability (outside public holidays) and third-party tour operator terms. 14. Winners may be required to take part in promotional activity. 15. By entering you accept GNM's full terms and conditions. 16. Name of prizewinners available on written request to promoter, Guardian News & Media Limited, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N19 5GU ("GNM").

Frozen in time

New year, 1995

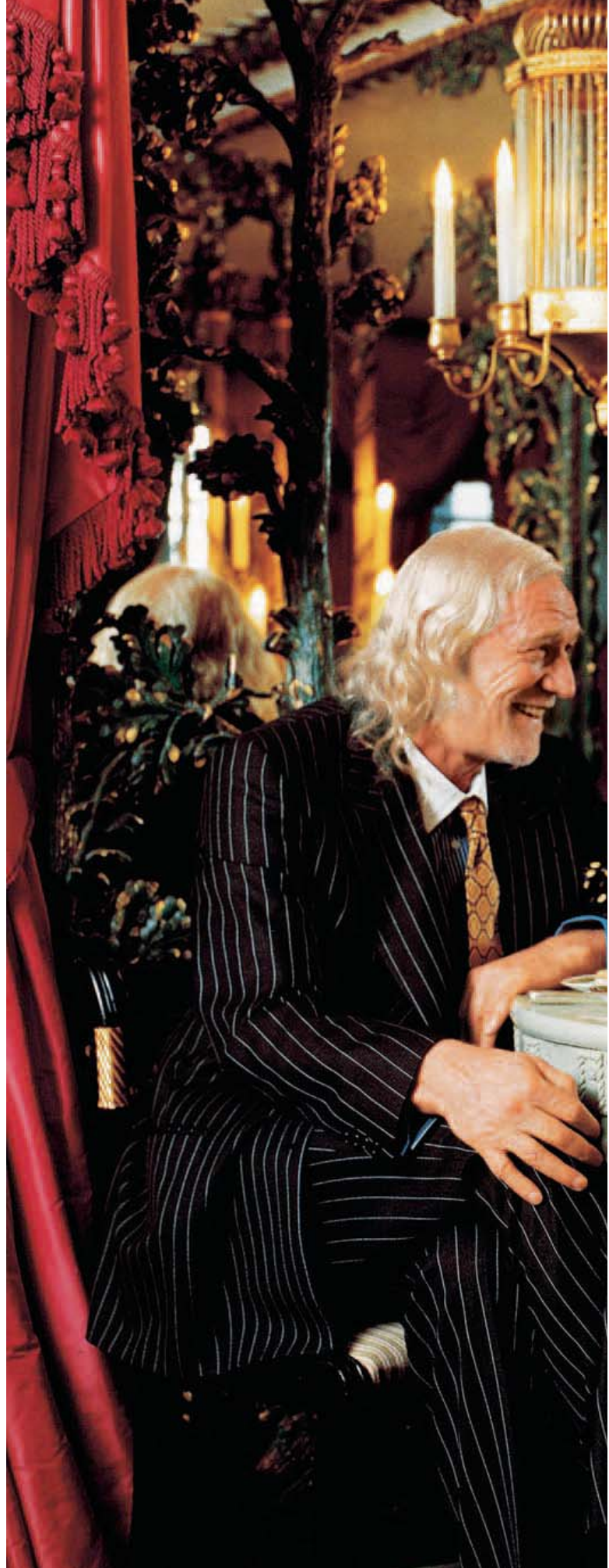
Hellraiser Club founder members
Richard Harris and Peter O'Toole
take tea at the Dorchester

WORDS Euan Ferguson
PHOTOGRAPH Snowden

They seem such grand but sadly distant times. Two big Irishmen, with more superlative 20th-century memories already lost for ever to the gorgeous glooms of a shot-glass than most of us accumulate in a lifetime. Unafraid, it always seemed, of other men; unafraid of beautiful women; unafraid of almost any role – Richard Harris once said he had only been miscast twice in his life, “both times as husbands”. Unafraid, astonishingly, of tea.

In fact, this was only 15 years ago, at new year in 1995, when Lord Snowden, commissioned by *Vanity Fair*, styled the two at tea in the Dorchester. And they do seem happy: because that, often, is one of the things truly fine drinkers can do with a certain magnificence: dress beautifully, and not drink, and still be happy. The bridge between the old-style British movie-making and the modern was encapsulated by Harris: he signed up for the *Harry Potter* franchise and lent fine feisty gravitas as the first Dumbledore but then died in the middle of it, in 2002. Peter O'Toole, who had half of his insides pulled out in 1976 because of alcoholism, is still with us – as, incidentally, is the magnificent Oliver Messel suite at the Dorchester.

Snowdon wears his technique lightly, the quality of his subjects catching the eye before the splendour of the framing; but this is beautifully done: the teapot (Snowdon's own, along with the rest of the tea set) centre-stage, the differing postures, doubled-up laughter and exuberant arched appreciation, framing the all, as if hand-drawn. The difference between careful stylish hand-drawing and photography is in the immediacy of what it's capturing; and, here, the tethered delight is the anecdote shared between these splendid roués. You would love to know which story it is. Grand but distant times, inured to the recapturing, had we not been blessed, too, with Snowden's Contax. **OFM**





Let the mousse loose

A lot of my favourite foods have disappeared off the nation's menus – and it's time they returned. Here's 10 for starters...



So, I finally ate the dish that recently caused what passes for excitement in the land of the restaurant critic. I went to the Dean Street Townhouse in Soho, and ate its mince and boiled potatoes. The professionals fell into three camps on this, the house dish. Some couldn't see the point of it, and said so; some liked it, and said so; and some obviously thought the former, but wrote the latter to appear knowing and – oh, this is funny – cool. What did I think? It was fine: tasty, filling, comforting. Mostly, though, it made me think of all the other dishes I'd like to see returned to menus in a blaze of glory. Here's a (deadly serious, utterly non-ironic) top 10.

1 Old-fashioned butter lettuce

In *Second Helpings of Roast Chicken*, Simon Hopkinson bemoans the rise of the “interesting” leaf, praising instead the round English lettuce. He then provides an excellent recipe for an English salad with homemade salad cream. He's right. Rocket has its place, but there are times when I long for the sweet, yielding market garden lettuce of yesterday. It tastes of summer, and of childhood, and has no need of chlorine and daffy packaging.

2 Melba toast I'm keen on butter, and what better garnish for it than a brittle triangle of Melba toast? Once, Escoffier's invention was standard at “posh” restaurants. Not now. In London, it's already extinct. In the countryside, it clings on, but you must know where to look. Where exactly? OK, between ourselves, you will find it served at dinner at the Rose & Crown in Romaldkirk, County Durham.

3 Brown bread ice cream Amazing how few people even know what this is. “Do you mean bread and butter pudding?”



Er, no. “Do you mean brown betty?” Nope. A (possibly) Victorian invention, its secret ingredient is breadcrumbs mixed with sugar and caramelised in the oven. Imagine a slice of good brown bread slathered in unsalted butter. Now imagine a bowl of good vanilla ice cream. Now imagine a marriage of the two, and hold that thought while you dig out your ice-cream maker.

4 Steak Diane A lot of the steak served in British restaurants is tasteless. You chew and chew, and wish you'd ordered fish. Or shoe leather. Why don't these establishments bring back steak Diane? Like good underwear, shallots, cream, and brandy can hide a multitude of sins.

5 Mushrooms à la Grecque and eggs mayonnaise My stepmother, M, made superb mushrooms à la Grecque. They tasted of tomatoes and soapy coriander seeds, and we ate them with warmed pittas to mop up the oily juices. She also served eggs mayonnaise, prettily dusted

Birds Eye has revived Super-mousse. I used to eat one every week at my granny's

with paprika. Why do people sneer at eggs mayonnaise? It's the school trip effect. Those of us whose mothers packed egg sandwiches for the bus to Alton Towers still haven't come to terms with the ignominy of the stink.

6 Junket Junket is sweetened milk set with rennet, which you can buy in any supermarket. Top with nutmeg. If you want swanky, add brandy. If you want to gild the lily, make like Keith Floyd and cover with clotted cream before serving.

7 Pease pudding A solid purée made from split yellow peas cooked in salty bacon stock. My preferred way of eating it – yes, I am dead common – is sliced, with a bit of ham, in a sandwich.

8 Mousse Fish mousses are everywhere. But you search in vain for a sweet one. I like cool, slippery orange mousse, served from a crystal bowl, pouring cream on the side. The good news is that Birds Eye has revived Supermousse. I used to eat a raspberry ripple Supermousse every week at my Granny Cooke's. Yum.

9 Rissoles and potted cheese Together because they are both made with leftovers, and are intensely flavourful, uniquely piquant, devilishly moreish. And they speak to our austere times.

10 Meat loaf “Meat loaf,” notes Alan Davidson in *The Oxford Companion to Food*, “can embody the sort of rusticity that the word ‘peasant’ evokes, but can also exhibit the kind of refinement associated with bourgeois cookery. Its range, however, does not extend into the realm of haute cuisine.” I'm not sure I can add anything to this lofty definition, save for to state the obvious: it is good with gravy, mash, and some peppery, buttered greens. **OFM**
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IN NEXT MONTH'S OFM

THE OUTDOORS ISSUE

Urban farming from Detroit to Docklands
Fishing with Giorgio Locatelli, gardening with Nigel Slater
Plus festival-friendly food from the Camping Cookbook

The next issue of Observer Food Monthly will be published on 20 June

WORD OF MOUTH

observer.co.uk/foodblog

Join the debate

This month: exclusive video of Yotam Ottolenghi making lemon and goats' cheese ravioli.





Could yours be the best recipe this year?

Who will be the winners of this year's Observer Food Monthly Awards? You decide. You can also enter your own recipe for a chance to win the best readers' recipe category.

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